School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1407820

The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Daily Strength for Daily Living.

BX
6333
C57
D3
1887

Texts (ais)

DAILY STRENGTH

FOR

DAILY LIVING.

TWENTY SERMONS ON

OLD TESTAMENT THEMES.

(WITH AN APPENDIX ON "ABRAHAM'S MISTAKE IN THE OFFERING OF ISAAC.")

BY

JOHN CLIFFORD,

M.A., LL.B, B.SC. (LOND.), F.G.S., D.D. (HON.),

MINISTER OF WESTBOURNE PARK CHAPEL, LONDON.

SECOND EDITION.

London:

E. MARLBOROUGH & CO., 51, OLD BAILEY, E.C.

BURT & SONS, 58, PORCHESTER ROAD, BAYSWATER, W.

1887.

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

To

MY BELOVED FELLOW-OFFICERS AND FELLOW-MEMBERS,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS OF JOYFUL FELLOWSHIP

IN THE

SERVICE OF GOD AND MEN,

I Dedicate

THESE SERMONS,

WITH

SINCERE AND INCREASING AFFECTION.

October 16th, 1885.

PREFACE.

IT has been my custom all through my ministry to choose a text of Scripture as a Motto for each New Year, and to treat it, not only as the basis of the first service in the year, but also as supplying a kind of anchorage for my thinking and that of those who hear me, during the succeeding twelve months.

This year the words selected were the welcome and gladdening message, "As thy days so shall thy strength be"; and I have tried to show some of the ways by which it is possible for those who believe that "life is worth living;"—worth living well, and in the *best* way; to gain the strength requisite for this high calling.

I feel deeply and growingly that our human strength lies in God; and that if we can only find the way to Him, and to His ideas and stores of vital force, we may be strong enough for a life of purity and truth, of beauty and victory, of service and joy.

Only a few paces have I travelled in this pilgrim's search; and these, for what seemed to me good and sufficient reasons, have been taken, during the first six months of this year, in the wide and ample paths of the *Old Testament*. First, and mainly, because, excepting the Revelation in the New Testament (which completes and crowns that in the Old), I know no light so soft and healing as that which shines on our pained eyes from the long and radiant history of the people of God. Herder, a chief teacher even amongst German chiefs, "resorted to it perpetually as the treasury of loftiest poetry, of deepest philosophy, and of purest religion and morality." I have repaired to its pages as containing the fullest stores of man-building power.

Again, the Books of the Old Testament, and more especially, just now, the *notions* of men about them, are in the sevenfold heated fires of human criticism; and have been, to our unspeakable advantage in the study of the said books, since the days of Lessing,

Astruc, and their fellows; much blinding tradition and mere human fancy being burnt up, to the better revealing of the pure gold of the Eternal Word. The Sun needs no apologist. It is for us to put down our shutters and permit his rays to enter our homes. I believe if we could only let the Old Testament send its own light and power, as a history of our Heavenly Father's dealings with souls, straight into our minds, we should rise into a realm where no criticism of its contents, or investigation of the mode of its composition, would ever disturb us. Nourished by the divine bread we should not fall into paroxysms of fear because restless students insist on tracing the growth of the nutritive grains of which the loaf consists. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, *because he trusteth in Thee.*"

I say "*if we could*" let the light shine straight into our souls;—for it is very difficult to do this. "Nothing good is easy," says Plato; how can we then expect to have the highest and best without effort, and chiefly without the effort of self-renunciation and of patient looking to God, waiting for Him till He open our eyes and cleanse our vision, so that we may "behold the wonders of His word." It is difficult for us Englishmen (children of the reasoning West) to see the writings of the Hebrews (sons of

the imaginative East) in their *original* simplicity and clearness, and to feel their native force as when they were fresh from the pens of God's writers. Weighted, and aided not a little, by the manifold daily demands of an onerous but happy pastorate, I have, week by week, attempted this great task of getting at the pure meaning of God's word, discovering what *it* really is, and setting that teaching in its close and wide relations to our daily human life. How imperfectly I have succeeded I feel most acutely, and nothing but the conviction that the issue of these words would do some little good enabled me to suppress a strong aversion to fixing in type the incomplete and fragmentary efforts of my weekly ministry.

For I do not preach so much to defend the Book as to do men good, by and through the Book. The saying of Goethe is worthy of all acceptation, "From the useful, through the true, to the beautiful"—the beautiful in character and in deed. I feel that I belong to this century, and if I am to be of any use at all I must speak to the real need of the day, to its sorrow and suffering, its quest for truth, and hunger for joy, its restlessness and impatience, its half-truths and illusions, its materialisms and "other-worldliness." Archæology is interesting but it is not life. The Bible is a book for a museum, in some of its ancient

version; but in *English*, it is for the English home and English workshops, for the sick-room and the Exchange, for the office of the "clerk" and the chambers of the lawyer, for the rule of the City and the problems of the State. If a man cannot speak to the living human heart out of the Book of the Maker of that heart, then from what will he address it?

I have spoken without reserve. My pulpit is my home. I cannot say what a joy it is to me to preach to my own people. I know so many of them personally, and feel the vibrating touch of a sympathy that has grown in sorrow and joy, in the glooms of the death-chamber, and amid the sunny hopes of the marriage-morning, in the keen agonies of repentance, the pathos of baffled will, and the fervours of a divine yearning for perfection. Those who listen to me hear me with their hearts, and what they would think of my love for them if I were not frank, and did not place the results of my thought, negative and positive, before them I do not know. We do not agree in opinion on all things. The basis of our fellowship is not opinion, but love of, and loyalty to, God in Christ. And I am glad to think that a sermon may be very useful that does not secure identity of opinion between preacher and hearer. Indeed, if my scant experience as a listener is

worth anything, I must say I have found some of the discourses with which I have disagreed of very special service to me. Certainly the contagion of religious enthusiasm is not dependent upon complete conformity of belief. Mr. Gladstone once said to an audience, "I don't come here to tell you what you want to hear; but what I think is true and just." For twenty-seven years we have dwelt together in that spirit; trying to tell one another "what is true and just."

I need not sketch the course of thought in this volume. Any one who wishes to see its outline will find a rough plan in the last sermon, on pages 401-3.

To the second Sermon I have added an Essay, in the hope of giving some of the more prominent phases of opinion on a difficult subject, and aiding any who may find an obstacle rather than an aid to faith, in the Biblical account of Abraham's Offering of Isaac.

I have given some notes, references, and an Index. For the Index I am indebted to my friend Mr. Arthur G. Hawes. In adding notes and references I have done as I wish to be done by. I value a book very much more if, besides having a list of contents, it has also an index, refers me to authorities for statements, and to books where I may, if I wish, pursue the line of thought.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	Daily Strength for Daily Living .	1
II.	Abraham's Mistake in the Offering of Isaac.	19
III.	Jacob's Baptism of Fire . . .	39
IV.	The Fight for Social Purity . .	57
V.	Divine Socialism	77
VI.	The Secret of Samson's Strength .	97
VII.	A Hebrew Love Story . . .	119
VIII.	Present-Day Inspiration . . .	139
IX.	Man-Building	163
X.	The Ministry of Song . . .	181
XI.	David's Great Sin, and God's Greater Grace	203
XII.	A One-Man Ministry . . .	223

PAGE

XIII. The Gospel of the Exile 241

XIV. The Gospel of the Exile Incarnate in Ezekiel 261

XV. Man in the Hands of Satan . . 286

XVI. I know that my Redeemer Liveth . 305

XVII. The Penitence of Perfect Job . . 325

XVIII. The Messiah-Idea; The same Yesterday, To-Day, and For Ever . 347

XIX. The Service of the Old Testament in the Making of Men . . 374

XX. The Joy of God the Strength of Men 401

APPENDIX. Abraham's Mistake in the Offering of Isaac . . . 425

INDEX 455

DAILY STRENGTH FOR DAILY LIVING.

"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists, one only:—an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of Infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good."

WORDSWORTH.

"The woof of life is dark, but it is shot with a warp of gold."

ROBERTSON.

"Strengthen and comfort yourself in the Lord; and be strong in His power if you are under the Lord's crosses, for you are in the beaten and common way to heaven."

RUTHERFORD.

"Leave the future; let it rest
Simply on the Saviour's will.
Leave the future; they are blest
Who confiding, hoping still,
Trust His mercy
To provide for every want,
And to save from every ill."

Daily Strength for Daily Living.

"AS THY DAYS SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."
Deuteronomy xxxiii. 25.

I. Who does not feel that these familiar words have a vitality and freshness altogether their own, and a wealth of inspiration independent of the man who first uttered them, and of the historic people who first heard them; independent too, of their place in this fresh edition of the Law of God for Israel, and of their rank in this farewell benediction to the tribes? They are as *living* as if they were spoken to us individually by the very voice of GOD this morning; and we feel as sure of their sweet truthfulness, aye, more sure than if we had seen them written in flaming letters of gold on the forehead of the sky as we gazed on the dawning of this New Year. Only a line out of an old Hebrew poem, they are as English, and as *human* as if we had met them in yesterday's newspaper, or had heard them in the swift and confiding interchange of

loving and sympathetic hearts. Brief as a proverb, they are as full of meaning as the Bible of God, and though old as the everlasting hills, they refresh us like the breath of a spring morning laden with the ozone of the sea. Said in a moment, yet they tell the total result of our whole life, the chief spiritual issue and comprehensive meaning of the long experience of the successive generations of the Sons of God. "The Lord hath been mindful of His own." "He hath not forgotten to be gracious to His people." "As their days, so has their strength been."

Therefore, we men, painfully conscious of our crippling weakness, and urged by a fiercer craving for executive power than for guiding light, must at once "fasten ourselves to God and live by the divine life of faith and love," convinced that God's strength underlies *all* our life, and is as available and useable as the air we breathe, and the light by which we see; and as we fill ourselves with this divine energy we shall be lifted to the full height of every day's demand, bear with unresenting patience each day's sorrow, confront with unfaltering courage each day's task, until all our days end in the one all-revealing and Everlasting Day in the Home of our Father in Heaven.

II. No one can justly quarrel with me, I am sure, for thus beginning by reading the name of God into this hoary promise. It is as necessary as to read 'intellect' into the word 'man,' or 'royalty' into the word 'king.' Put God out of it, and you cannot keep it in any sense a promise, a gospel, a vision of beauty and glory, a cordial for the heart, and a light for the life. God is all in all to it, as indeed He is to us in and through all our days.

I do not forget that this evangel was spoken about *material* things and not spiritual, and was addressed to a populous and far-extending tribe, and not to an individual spirit: but does not God make suns as well as souls, and cares He not for the broad and complex life of nationalities as well as for the brief and simpler life of men? Is He not Himself an infinite and incomprehensible Manifoldness as well as a Unity? and do we not restrain the Holy One by barring Him out of what we mistakenly call our 'lower' life? Undeniably, God in the plenitude of His power, lay at the back of this promise to the tribal descendants of Asher! Moses could not have thought of it apart from Him. He was himself '*the man of God*'; the first to wear that grand and unique name; and had no more notion of blessing of any sort without God, than we have of progress without pains, or success without effort. For himself he was *of* God, and leant on God with his whole weight, drew from Him his gladdening hope, and stimulating forecast, and on his assured conviction of the depth and reality of the divine interest in the collective life of Israel, he built the mighty saying: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

In fact, was it not "by faith" in God, this conception of the unexcelled prosperity of Asher took shape at the first? Was it not when Jacob lay dying, waiting with cheerful eagerness for God's salvation, his serene spirit feasted with enrapturing visions of the vast future of his family, that his mind, fastening on the suggestion of "prosperity" contained in his son Asher's name, sketched his heritage in the brief but expressive strain, "his bread shall be plenteous, and royal dainties shall he yield."

Nor does this greatest of all the Hebrews, as he recites "the blessing wherewith he blesses the Children of Israel," dwell in a lower realm. His spirit is with God, and full of God, aflame with God's love, and alight with God's glory. Memory is enriched with the recollection of His appearings, and he begins and ends his benedictions with descriptions of Divine manifestations expressed in language of the finest poetry, and of the most exalted inspiration. "God," says the Seer, at starting, "God came amid the glories of Sinai, His light streamed from the distant heights of Seir amongst the Edomites, and stretched to Paran, the boundary wall of Canaan,—He loves the nations, His holy ones are in His hand, He is King over the tribes of Israel;" and then passing in review the companies of Jacob's children, he remounts to God, at once the abiding refuge of His people, and their strong and unfailing support, and exclaims, in an overflow of delight, "Hail to Thee, O Israel! who is like Thee? A people saved in the Lord, the shield of Thy help, and the sword of Thine exaltation."

With so radiant an atmosphere the commonest bit of earth is bright with heavenly beauty. In such a setting the promise of the lowest material good becomes divine: and the blessing on Asher *must* read, "Blessed" of GOD, "be Asher before the rest of the sons of Jacob-Israel. Let him be the favoured one among his brethren; let him dip his foot in oil. May thy fortresses be iron and brass, and thy rest-giving-strength as the days of thy life." It is a threefold benediction. (1) The land of Asher will make a quick and bountiful response to the cultivating spade. Its harvests will be abundant. The streams of plenty will flow to every foot, giving Asher the first place in agricul-

tural wealth. (2) Nor will this material opulence excite envy amongst the tribes, or be attacked by marauding invaders. Thy fortresses of defence shall be as invincible as if built of iron and brass, and (3) in complete security,—the security of fulness of strength, shall all this prosperity be enjoyed throughout the days of thy tribal life.

If *we* do our farming, build our fortunes, make our money and rear our families, defend our cities and extend our empire, without God, and "expose ourselves to countless miseries of shame and disappointment: because in our doing we depend on nothing but our own powers; and in seeking, choose only our own gratification; and are in the habit of supposing that temporal prosperity is owing either to worldly chance or worldly prudence; and is never granted in any visible relation to states of religious temper;"* the elder Hebrews did not, least of all this man of God, Moses! God pervaded their life. His voice was heard in every strong wind, and His goodness seen in every sheaf of corn. Each child of the family was a sign of His favour, and each lamb of the fold His gift. The firmament, with its glittering stars, was His handiwork, and every 'force' of Nature the proof of His actual presence. God was nigh at hand, for release and for defence, for succour and for strength. Their exigency was His opportunity. Their work was His; and their prayer, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."

* "The Pleasures of England," by John Ruskin, D.C.L., LL.D. (p. 76.)

Nor can we Englishmen, with all our marvellous strength, dispense with God. He is necessary to our commerce, to our agriculture, to our civilization, to the solution of our social problems, to the defence of our State, to our *whole* well-being. Let us put away the treacherous practice of excluding God from our private business, and only giving Him room in our public worship, of banishing Him from our social and national concerns, and merely allowing the play of His mercy in the soul. Any day any where without God, the living God, is a day of weakness and failure, and leads to shame and disappointment. Apart from God we can do nothing God-like. With God, as our days, so shall our strength be. This is the pith of every Gospel, and the light of every noble life.

III. But though this law came by Moses, the man of God, it is uttered with more penetrating reality and gracious persuasiveness by Jesus Christ, the SON OF GOD. As He speaks of the sparrow that does not fall to the ground, pierced by the beak of the cruel hawk, without the eye of our Father; of the lily that wears all its loveliness without a blush of self-consciousness, or a fret about its approaching decay; and of the grass which covers with its restful green, the brown earth to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; He lifts us from material to spiritual good, saying—If God so clothe the grass of the field, and grace the lily with beauty, and watch over the sparrow; will He not much more give His Holy Spirit to meet your yearning, answer your trustful prayers, and aid your strenuous quest for righteousness? And as if to make His words into powers, He Himself nestles in His Father's bosom, lives a wholly unanxious

life, and gives His days to the freest and most constant use of the strength He draws from the loving Father.

Christ Himself has in fact come into our days, written His great name upon them, created the Christian era, made the ages resonant with His fame, and given us the strongest guarantee that, in all our upward life, not less than our downward, in our soul-culture, as well as our agriculture, the strength of God meets us, in its complete sufficiency and perfect fitness. The Incarnation is nothing else than God in time, giving His redeeming strength and satisfying peace to men ; God making His deepest descent, even to the lowest levels of our needs and the darkest of our days, and carrying thither His exhaustless fulness to meet and master our sin, to face and defeat our temptation, to subdue death and the grave, and to give immortal blessedness ; the historical embodiment of the saying: "Go, do your work for your fellows, and do it with all your might of self-sacrifice and enthusiasm, 'and lo! I am with you all through the days'; and as those days are in need, in difficulty or in joy, so shall your strength be."

IV. That reference to our Master reminds us that there is a quality in the strength of Christ which carries us back again to the language of Moses. At least twenty-seven words in the Hebrew language are translated "strength" in our authorized version ; and I need scarcely say, with the effect of not infrequently obscuring different and fruitful shades of meaning. In the case before us, the Septuagint employs a word of similar import to our version, but Gesenius and Delitzsch prefer the term, "rest"; and it is not to be doubted that the mind of the writer was fixed on

strength *as a condition of rest*, as diffusing that sweet security which prevents prosperity from becoming a weakness, and the day's successes from imperilling to-morrow's work.

There are several kinds of strength. There is that of a soldier, which goes forth in vigorous and disciplined action; one long out-put of effective energy. There is the strength of the speaker, who, in the fulness of his passion, expends more force in restraining than in expressing his emotion. In others, strength flows out as gently as the dew falls, or the rose breathes its fragrance. There is the strength of the patient sufferer, who offers a meek and firm resistance to the incessant solicitations to irritability and fretfulness; and there is the strength which dwells in Christ, not only in the agonies of Gethsemane, as victorious patience and self-abnegation, but in His conversation with His disciples at the Last Supper, as restfulness and peace. I think we must mature in years and in the Christian life to know the sweetness of this aspect of this ancient Word. At first we think of and covet strength for battle, for aggressiveness, and for victory. Rarely do we seek the strength to sit still, and wait on God in unbroken repose; which after all is one of the highest forms of power seen in "the Strong Son of God," and attainable by us through Him. Most welcome, then, for weary, restless, and fevered man is the message, "as thy days, so shall thy rest-giving strength be." It pledges a hallowed calm in life's turmoil, solace in acute pain, animation under life's oppressive languors, and tranquillity amid the agitations and fears incident to weariness and exhaustion. And even more welcome, the gracious invitation springing up out of the heart of that most

Restful Life, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls;" a rest that will itself issue from the Christ-infused *strength* that enables you, under the weightiest responsibilities He imposes, to endorse His great saying, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

V. It is, then, an infinitely lucid message straight from God, that we have here: first through His prophet Moses, again by His Son Jesus Christ, and lastly, but not less important, through His sons and daughters around us to-day. Starting back away there, at the dim beginnings of Hebrew civilized life, it has travelled on incorporated with the lives of myriads, and appears before us in this present year of grace, with a finer vindication of its truthfulness than at any previous moment of its long history. What a thrilling tale is this chequered story of human progress! How its successive chapters exhilarate and inspire! What divine victories are there on record! With what irresistible energy the loving might of God has gone forth in trustful and lowly souls, subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, uplifting the oppressed, and saving the lost. Every page declares His prowess! Each line speaks of His persisting love! Day unto day shows forth in continuous panorama the onflow of His world-regenerating strength!

And this day of ours surpasses all its fore-runners in the clear resonance and full emphasis of its declaration of the sufficiency of God for all the wants of man. This day, with its wonderfully quickened missionary ardour, its myriad workers at home and abroad, fine philanthropies, numberless organizations, heroic self-suppression, unquiver-

ing serenity of faith in the face of malignant attack, and its hosts of souls reaching out after the infinite Christ, and satisfied with nought else,—this day asserts with convincing logic that the grace of God is more than ever the full, adequate, and permanent element of the best human living. Imagine we are holding an old-fashioned experience meeting, composed of the saints of God who have passed from this community within this half century to the joys and songs of heaven! Men and women with the grand Puritan conception that life is rooted in God, who talk with the Puritan awe but with the Puritan dignity and frankness, of their soul struggles and fears, their self-searchings and deliverances. "I cried," says one, "unto the Lord with my voice, and the Lord heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." From the lips of another comes the song, "He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." A third has dwelt long in the city of nameless griefs and mute afflictions, and says, "my tears have been my meat and drink, day and night. I am poor and needy, *but* the Lord thinketh upon me." One, with a countenance marred by inward suffering, has just struggled through the Gethsemane of Scepticism, and been impaled on the cross of doubt, but is able to say, in the strong consciousness of life from the dead, "God has not forgotten me; though I could not see Him through the thickening fog, and questioned whether He existed, His strong arm was supporting me, and His Spirit has upheld me, whilst His sufficient grace has been clothing itself in new *forms*, and the eternal truths of His revelation have been cast in fresh moulds, and now I have peace." "Had it not been," declares a

sixth, "the Lord, Who was on my side, my foot had slipped, but though His billows have gone over me, He never left me." And so with a unity that has no fracture, and an accent of conviction that leaves no room for question, these voices from the upper heaven bid us take this word as our Motto, bind it as an amulet about our neck, and go forward, delivered from fears and enlarged in hopes, enjoying God's gifts with a free spirit, and doing His will with a full manhood, never doubting that "as our days, so shall our strength be."

VI. Nor is this all. Our faith not only rests upon the experience of men like ourselves, upon the word and life of the Saviour and upon the inspiration of Moses, but it derives no little energy from the fact, that this promise is based on the very constitution of our nature, and is incorporate with the structure of our life. Both man and his days are God's. We are His *offspring*, belong to Him, live in and by Him, are moved by the strong impulses of His Spirit, and owe to Him our redemption and education, our peace of soul, and power of service. And, He, our Father, makes our days for us, as the mother's breast is made for the babe that rests on it, and is nourished from it; as the school is made for the boy that goes through it and is educated in it; as the earth itself is made for the light and heat of the sun that warms it. Therefore, it is in keeping with the nature and constitution of things that He should give us strength according to the character and needs of the day He sends us, fitted both in its kind and in its quantity for us with such exactness that we may be perfectly fitted for His days, whatsoever they may bring, no day mastering us by its difficulty or darkness,

or dazing us by its brightness; but, we men, subduing all our days to the sublime ends for which God has made and saved us, and is now educating us.

The day does not make the man, but the man the day. As a slave may be a freeman, and a monarch a slave, so the day of temptation may reveal "a friend of God," and a day of prosperity exhibit a sensuous and sceptical Solomon, or "a dark and cloudy day" veil a victorious Job, and a bright and sun-filled day expose to corruption a vain and God-forgetting Herod. Days are noble or ignoble as we make them, and every day may be a "red-letter" day, if we know how to fill it with the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Go into them thinking that you are sufficient for yourselves, knocking only at the doors of your many-roomed nature, and seeking for satisfaction in the myriad fields of your ample genius; and then when strength and heart fail, you will have no satisfying portion, no care-conquering sense of adequacy of resources, nought, alas! but the bitter memory of a wasted and frivolous life. Begin your days, taking each one as God's gift to you, believing that God goes before you, "prevents, *i.e.*, precedes, you with the blessings of His goodness," pioneers you, and lays up a store of strength suited for each hour of the whole day, and so link your life with God's, and your days "each to each by natural piety."

In view of these principles let me say first, *Remember our days do not come to us in multitude, but in regulated succession, and with a largely educating variety.* Of the 365 days of the year, no two are alike, and no two come at once. There are days that dawn with such splendour that we open our eyes on a sea of sunshine,

soon, alas! to give place to a sky laden with black clouds and air soaked in sooty mist. We have bracing, hope-creating, spring days: warm summer days, balm-filled—sun-gilded, when it is a delight even to breathe; rich autumn days, with fruitful harvests, and whispers of decay; and then winter days, with hard roads and keen biting air,—and amongst all these are days that help and, days that hinder,—days when life is at blood-heat, and joy flows over, and days when the glare is so oppressive, and the despair so insufferable, that existence is a burden we are tempted to lay down; but the *worst* day is but a day after all, and has only twelve hours in it, and we are not so sure of having all of them that we need trouble over much about the eleventh hour, if at present it is but the third hour of the day. Let us rather greet our days in the spirit of one of the most industrious workers of our time, who has taken as his motto the word "To-Day," and sees suspended before him the text, "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," illustrated by the beautiful and suggestive lines—

"To-Day,"
Unsullied comes to thee—new-born,
To-morrow is not thine;
The Sun may cease to shine
For thee, ere earth shall greet its morn.

Be earnest, then, in thought and deed,
Nor fear approaching night;
Calm comes with evening light,
And hope and peace—Thy duty heed
"To-Day."

What wealth of stimulus to industry in that thought! How it goads to a careful use of life's minutes! What concentration it secures! What vigour of action! What alertness for opportunity! "*Thy duty heed to-day*"; assured that as strength followed the prompt faith of the man with the withered hand, so your firm grip of duty will be coincident with an influx of the full strength of God. Doing in every single hour what is to be done in it, going at it at once, and going through it, from the first to the last stroke, never "drawling," or "dawdling," or dropping minutes between your different tasks, but finishing each one faithfully, lovingly, and heroically, you shall "stir up your souls to take hold of" God's power, and make blessed use of the infinite resources of His grace.

2. *Do not fetch your to-morrows into your to-days.* Remember the familiar lines of Adelaide Anne Proctor—

"One by one the sands are flowing,
One by one the moments fall;
Some are coming, some are going,
Do not strive to grasp them all.

"One by one thy duties wait thee,
Let thy whole strength go to each;
Let no future dreams elate thee,
Learn thou first what these can teach.

"Do not look at life's long sorrow,
See how small each moment's pain;
God will help thee for to-morrow,
Every day begin again."

This perhaps is a day of new pledges. You have resolved to turn over a new leaf; the old one being so torn and blotted,

you cannot bear to look at it. You will confess yourself on the side of God, and truth, and right. You will be a Christian, but,—ah, there is that old difficulty—"I'm afraid I should not hold out. I could not stand it. The jeering would be too much for me. Those fellows would goad me into my old ways—I dare not.——" Man! take thy days as they come. Hold out to-day and do not fear about to-morrow. Live for Christ from sunrise to sunset. Fear not. God will not fail you, if to-morrow is worse than to-day, and if next week the fires are hotter still, He will hold you up in the furnace: and you shall come out of the fierce flames unhurt, and your God shall be glorified. No temptation shall befall you from which He will not either open a door of escape, or else help you to conquer. What can you want more?

Is it a day of painful strain, of orphaned childhood, of husbands sorrowing at the graves of wives, of widows pushed into the strife for bread, of crushed hopes, fierce conflicts with temptation, and of deepening darkness? Friends are gone. Health is gone. The step is inelastic, the eye dim, the soul sad, and heart and flesh are failing at once. Yet let not your faith slip, or your courage falter. Your Heavenly Father knows all. Even this day is His, and He will give you His rest in it. Trust still in Him. His sympathy will never fail, His tender grace will stoop to every need; and even these very trials may be some of the strong threads by which He in His loving-kindness is drawing you nearer and fastening you tighter to Himself.

I have known not a few Christians who have been long disturbed by the fear of death. It seems a natural, but it

is an un-Christian, and unworthy dread, that seizes some souls in anticipation of the next life. Did we believe as we ought that—

> "Death is another life. We bow our heads
> At going out. We think and enter straight
> Another golden chamber of the King's,
> Larger than this we leave, and lovelier."

We should never think of our departure for heaven with despairing consternation ; but like one of our friends who passed away last week, we should be able to say, as she did, to her weeping daughter, "Be brave, my child, I shall be in heaven to-morrow." Let us live fully and wholly our *living* days, and we may leave to God the day He sends for our translation, certain of being filled, not only with His rest-giving strength, but also with the animating hope of a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

3. Though our days come in *succession* they make a *unity*, and they will make a beautiful and well-ordered unity, if we live them all with God and for men,—with God the Eternal who binds them into an Everlasting Now, and makes us one with Him, through the loving discipline of patient and self-sacrificing services to our brothers and sisters. God must be the perpetual element of our life ; not an occasional resource, an inconstant quantity, an accidental presence. Ah ! this is where we fail. Hence come our trooping fears, our dread of duty, our alarms at the failing of energy, our misgivings about our work ! We hurry to God like frightened children when the ship founders, the bank breaks, the sight is dim, the child goes astray, the crisis of choice is upon us ; but we go more in fear than in faith, we are not *at home* with God, our

language is strange, our spirit chafed and fretted, and our prayers selfish. God is our *Home*, and we ought never to be out of it; our dwelling-place, and we should not forsake it; our investing atmosphere, and we must always breathe it; our sunshine, and we must walk ever in His light; so every hour will be filled with His sufficiency, and our life enriched with His fulness.

4. From that Home in God, what can our outlook be, even on the saddest days, but one of restful hope, quiet expectation, calm dependence on the exhaustless love of our Father in Heaven? We have had, and we still have, our sorrows, cares, anxieties, perplexities, duties, and foes; but we will not be fretted or worried about any or all of them. The Lord hath been mindful of us, He will bless us. We will cast all our cares on Him, trust in His grace moment by moment, assured that He is always *in front* of us, our Leader and Champion, Deliverer and Father; and that His strength will be sufficient, through Christ, to aid us in bearing and doing all things. So shall we add our testimony to that great volume of unimpeachable evidence of the absolute truth of that central and abiding law of all lives lived in God—"As their days, so is their strength."

"NO place, however beautiful, can be perfectly beautiful till the light from the lamp of self-sacrifice falls upon it." RUSKIN.

"There is no use of writing of things past unless they can be made in fact, things present; not yesterday at all, but simply to-day and of what it holds of fulfilment and of promise is ours; the dead ought to bury their dead, ought they not?"

CARLYLE.—*Correspondence with Emerson*, ii., 6, 7.

"When I ask myself what reason or right I have to believe that a man who lived in Palestine 1860 years ago was the Son of God, in order to be certain that in this belief I have hold of a substance and not of a mere shadow, I must discern in the history itself a light and truth which will meet the demands both of my reason and conscience. *In fact, however true the history may be, it cannot be of any moral or spiritual benefit to me until I apprehend its truth and meaning.* This, and nothing less than this, is what I require, not only in this great concern, but in all others; *for the only real instruction is that which helps us to perceive the truth and meaning of things*—not that which merely asserts that such and such things are true, and insists on our accepting them as such." T. ERSKINE.—*The Spiritual Order*, 82.

Abraham's Mistake in the Offering of Isaac.

"OFFER HIM FOR AN OFFERING."

Genesis xxii. 1—19.

The value of any conception of human life depends on the way in which it welds into a harmonious whole its disturbed and antagonistic details, illumines with a clear and noble purpose its monotonous and petty activities, accounts for the presence of the engrossing and irremovable element of temptation—temptation often aggravated by mistake, illusion, and delusion: and finally, on the ease and thoroughness with which it is applicable to the wearisome trifles and tragic actualities of our existence.

The elements of the human lot are so sadly tangled, wildly contradictory, and often irrepressibly tumultuous, that any solacing revelation of its meaning must prove that all these conflicting things *do work together*, like the various

works of a well-made watch, or the numerous wheels of a vast manufactory, for *good*, and for *the good* designed by their Creator and Administrator. Man seems so be-littled by the humdrum efforts to maintain his mere existence, and so be-draggled in the miry ruts of worldly routine, that no message can be a full gospel for him that does not show how fidelity in that which is *least* drills and educates for fidelity in that which is highest; and how "the cup of cold water" may be so given as to lift the donor to divine rank, and to secure for him the divine approbation. To live is to be tempted, in most if not in all points; and we aggravate our temptations by well-intentioned but mistaken deeds, and with the best purposes in the world multiply our difficulties, increase our burdens, and create obstacles we cannot overleap; therefore, if anyone is to talk to us so as to win our confidence as well as our attention, he must tell us how these mistakes leave us, what becomes of us and our acts, when aims and achievements are so far apart and not rarely in violent collision, and how at last, after all our failure and blunder, we stand before the highest tribunal of all.

This is asking much, but even this is not enough. A workable theory of human living in a work-a-day world like ours, and under conditions so hard and so engrossing, must not make large demands upon our time or energy; but must be easy of apprehension, take up little room in our minds, find its way into the brain and heart of a child as readily as into the cultured intelligence of a philosopher, and be susceptible of immediate, out-and-out and universal application to all the facts and details of living. I do not mean that it should be present to the eye, as if written out

in express terms on a slate, or readily reportable to an anxious "interviewer," but we should have it consciously or unconsciously, so as to be able to work from it, and by it, with such ease, spontaneity, and wholeness, that its presence will constitute each soul a *unit of force* for the elected task of each successive hour of life.

Now I claim that such a theory ; complying at all points with these demands, is the golden thread of these Scriptures, shining here and there with arresting lustre, in words like, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," but existing everywhere and all through the tapestry of Revelation, making known the compact and terse law of DAILY STRENGTH FOR DAILY LIVING ; or, all of God for each and all of us men.

Our life, says our Bible, with its conflict and trial, failure and struggle, illusiveness and fulness, galling poverty and magnificent opportunity, agonizing need and grand prophecies, is *a portion of the Divine Life.* God Himself is in it ; not at its outermost edge, but at its beating heart ; not sitting remote from its agitations, a mere Judge or a curious Inspector ; but Himself living in and through it all, like a father who watches his boy's struggles with his *heart*, and aids him with his quick sympathy and large intelligence ; in it, working against its evil with His great strength, correcting mistakes, forgiving sinners, taking trouble with them, entering into covenants with them fighting their battles and inspiring them to fight for themselves, "working in them to will and to do" with the fullest pleasure, re-making them by His Spirit, and always so working as to solace the heart of the weary, deliver the oppressed, extinguish wrong, and crown goodness and righteousness for evermore. That is the Biblical theory,

and so far as I have yet seen, it is the only one that welds together the opposed elements of life in the hot fires of purifying affliction; and by the strokes of a loving discipline, interprets and ennobles the insignificant and mechanical, by saving and ennobling the doer; is a key to failure and sin by the revelation of a God who delights in mercy and suffers to forgive; and is so simple in itself that a trustful child may learn it as swiftly as it learns its mother's love; and yet so lofty, that the most cultured mind and the purest and largest character will never outgrow it.

Can all that be decisively proved? Is it possible to convince ourselves of the truth of these sayings? I believe it is; and I know no better, more *Biblical*, indeed I may say, more scientific way of beginning, than that of sifting to the bottom the most crucial experiments made in human living by men who have fastened themselves to God in faith, and love, and hope, and striven against unspeakable odds with invincible fortitude, though with varying loyalty and conscious incompleteness, to discover and do His will. *Therefore I take our theory, and subject it to the severest strain I know, viz.: that of the* TEST-CASE *offered in the supremest trial narrated in the puzzling and many-sided career of the head and founder of the Jewish race.*

Abraham is the first, if not the greatest of the spiritual heroes of the Hebrew people, a man, indeed, of the 'dead past' as to date, but as notably of the living present in the difficulties of his lot, the faults of his character, and the noble faith and beautiful reverence of his heart, as though

he were a Jew worshipping but yesterday in the Bayswater Synagogue: or (being a progressive and Christ-discerning soul) a Christian blending his faith and service with ours this morning. Strangely complex is his character! Strikingly human the combination of defect and excellence, of great mistakes and great devotion, of detestable cowardice and of divine courage! At one moment, so timid that he tells that worst sort of lie, the lie that is a *verbal* truth, to screen his wife; and at another so fearlessly self-suppressive that in obedience to what he thinks the will of God, he lifts his hand to thrust the murderous knife into the quivering flesh of his darling son. A man dazed by life's illusions, a dreamer of strange dreams, and a seer of impossible visions, he yet has a firm hold of solid fact, and is ready, in the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers, to cross the Euphrates and travel to Damascus, that he may separate himself from idolatry, and not be tempted to prostrate himself before a corrupting falsehood. Tempted in more points than we are, and yielding often, yet so true to the light he sees, that he stands out like a faithful Abdiel in his consecration to the good, the right, and the true. A great traveller and a sturdy soldier, a loving father and a kind master, a real sufferer, enduring a great fight of afflictions, and a true conqueror, never himself becoming a fettered slave; he is a typal Jew, or rather a typal *Man;* who finds his chief delight in the recognition of the wisdom and goodness and love of that God who has admitted him to the hallowed intimacies and inspiring uses of His sacred "friendship."

Now from that test-life, take the most critical incident. Examine the metal of the man when he is cast into the fiercest fires! Out of his long pilgrimage, select the days in

which he has the steepest, toughest climb, even along the rugged heights of the mountain of parental self-sacrifice. From his many days of trial, take those in which he needs the "Strength" of God the most, and see whether he has it, what he does with it, and what comes of his use of it. For if the bridge will not bear the biggest load that may at any time cross it, and the wildest whirl of the wildest storm that may sweep over it, it is not safe; but, if at such a time it is steadfast as the everlasting hills, we need not fear, but having crossed over it ourselves, we may "wire" back our witness to the solidity of the structure to those who follow us, and assure them that "all is well."

Could any day—I ask those who know most of the men of sorrows and whose acquaintance is widest and most recent with the depths of human suffering—could any day, think you, exceed in misery and anguish that tragical time in which Abraham, seized by the spell of an irresistible inspiration, first felt that he must offer his son, his only son, his beloved son Isaac, to God, or be guilty of disobedience to the Lord and Ruler of his life? Jehovah claimed the full consecration of his most valued and cherished possession to Himself. The Divine mandate rung out in the chambers of his soul, "Offer him for an offering." What a knell of doom for all his fondest hopes! What a baptism to be baptized with! How bitter a cup to drink! Well may he say, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Jehovah, save me from this hour!" Can you blame him if he offers that prayer? Look, fathers and mothers, at your one child, in whom you have garnered your loves and hopes for a score years, and ask what would have been your cry?

And remember too, Abraham is an *old* man, and his heart is sore, for he has led a troubled life. Early in his days he felt compelled to leave father and mother and kindred, and dwell in a strange land, so that he might not lose his God. Conscience isolated him from the established religion and closed against him the door of "Society." His tent, though it had many costly treasures, was unenriched with that most coveted and satisfying good, a child and heir of his own. It was not till after years of weary waiting, and hope was well nigh dead, that Isaac was born. Then he grew up under his own personal and loving care, rarely out of his sight, his mind stored with all his father knew of God and His revelation, a meek and meditative lad, the pride and delight of that first Hebrew Home. Wasn't the old man likely to love him with a love passing that of women, even though those women were mothers? How tenaciously *we* cling to the young life about us as we feel our own lease swiftly running out! How we live again in the presence of the tireless and spontaneous activity of that new stock and replenish the wasting fires of our vitality! How we want to keep it near us, to shape it with our own hands, to control its choices, to fix its destiny; and what a loud lament escapes us when God says, "Offer him to me as an offering!" Ah! this is the culmination of human trials! The precious and beautiful vase, chased with figures of exquisite loveliness by our own hands, enshrining our dearest hopes and our fondest affections, is being taken from our home and sight, and we cannot bear it!

The day of the offering of Isaac is, then, the day of days, the day of fearful temptation, of impending judgment in

Abraham's long and much-tried life; more severely afflictive than the day of exile from the old homestead, more endangering than the battle with the kings, more acutely painful than the risking of his wife's safety, more distressing than even the doom of Sodom; worse than any one, or all these put together, and yet he made it unspeakably worse by misreading God's message, and mistaking the significance of the strong impulse that disturbed and tempted him. God said to him, "Go offer thy son for an offering, at a spot and under circumstances of which I will tell thee." The message was not "Go slay thy son," but simply and only—"offer him for an offering," *i.e.*, offer him wholly to God and for God's uses, surrender him at once and for ever, let God Himself direct and shape his life, as He has done yours, give him full freedom, permit him to be a living independent Will, unfettered by the restraints of an unwise, though loving parental dictation, dedicated wholly and for ever to God and to God's work in the world. That was the entire meaning of the revelation, and Abraham would have obeyed the Lord's voice in *form* as well as in spirit, if he had taken Isaac to the mountains, and said like Hannah with her son Samuel, or Isaiah with himself, "Here is my gift, take it, use it, as Thou wilt, and where Thou wilt. I offer it wholly and unreservedly to Thee." Directions would then have reached him of the way in which that surrendered life was henceforth to be used in the establishment of the kingdom, or rule of God on the earth.*

*"Offer him for an offering" is the true rendering of the Original Direction. Gesenius, one of the highest authorities, says of the *verb*, "It signifies (1) to go up, and is often used in speaking of those who go from a lower to a higher place, as from Egypt to Judæa; also of those who go up to the sanctuary, sanctuaries having been built on high

But Abraham fell into the sin which so easily besets us, of importing into the Divine revelation the current falsehoods of that heathen-world from which he had been so steadfastly departing in thought and in spirit all the days of his life, thereby reading into God's mandate a commission to murder his own child, and so adding unimaginable severities to the heart-rending fierceness of the temptations which life had brought him. The words creating this awful crisis in his soul, did not mean "kill thy son, and burn him with fire," although they required a deed of scarcely less poignancy and anguish, as parental experience in many cases will vouch, viz., that total giving-up of the loved and precious life which he had fondled for twenty years, and in which he had stored all his hopes and loves, to a future he could not see and dare not guess. Goaded by the agony of the hour, he leapt forthwith to follow the *first* impression that seized him; arising early in the

places, like monasteries—Ex. xxxiv. 24. (2) To increase, to overcome. (3) To cause to go up, to lead up—Josh. ii. 6. To put lamps on the candlestick—Ex. xxv. 37. Specially to put a sacrifice on the altar in Isa. lvii. 6. The *noun* "offering" describes what is laid on the altar; and specially with a word signifying perfect—a sacrifice of which the whole was offered." "In *after ages* it was specially applied," says Prof. Godwin, "to some *burnt* offerings, but certainly this was not the primary signification, and its use in the Levitical law, whatever that may be, would not prove its meaning in the time of Abraham. There is nothing in the original," he adds, "respecting slaying or burning. There were terms to denote such actions, and these were employed when slaying or burning had to be expressed, but they are not used here. The noun is derived from the verb, and both are general terms, not defining the way in which the offering was made."—*Expositor* (Second Series, Vol. I., 305.) No doubt the words are emphatic, as in the subsequent promise, God says, "In blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee," so here the direction is "Offer him for an offering"; but according to a rule illustrated by Ewald (*Syntax of the Hebrew language*, 51-3) the repetition of the idea of the verb in the noun adds to the intensity of the direction to surrender, and enforces the need for completeness in the gift, but it makes no specification of the *mode* in which the offering is to be made. It does *not* say, it must be *slain* and *burnt*.

morning, summoning his son and his servants, he set out for "the place of which God had told him," there to bind and slay and thus offer his beloved Isaac to God.

It was a "grievous fault and grievously did" Abraham "answer it"; but it was his own, and due to the fact that he was not even yet wholly crucified to the Pagan world, in its ideas and affections. Human sacrifices in religious worship and in extreme cases were not uncommon. Men despairing of finding peace, asked, like Balak, "whether they should offer the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul." Expiatory offerings were in vogue, and Abraham suffered himself to be swept back into the currents of a false religion, and to contemplate pleasing Jehovah by an act He Himself had expressly forbidden aforetime, and did not now command.* No Old Testament hero is faultless, not even the founder of the Hebrew Religion. Keener than most of his time in his spiritual perceptions, making the noblest sacrifices for purity and truth, looking far along the dim vistas of futurity for the arrival of a Great Deliverer, a Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, yet he made serious mistakes and made them frequently, but none of them punished him so severely as that in which

* Not only in Syria but in Egypt, in and before the time of Joseph, human sacrifices were offered to Typhon, the god of evil, and to Sati, (Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, II., 18.) Euripides represents Agamemnon preparing to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, but is prevented at the last moment by the goddess Diana who provides in her stead a hind. —*Iph. Aul.* 783. The author of a *Physician's Problems* says, Aristides, on the morning of the battle of Platæa, sent three nephews of Xerxes, whom he had taken prisoners, to Themistocles, and by the advice of an augur they were offered to Bacchus to purchase his favour. It is well known that the "Moabite Stone" describes how Mesha took his eldest son, who would have reigned in his stead, and offered him in sacrifice on the wall, to overawe the beseigers, and to propitiate Chemosh. *Cf.* 2 Kings iii. 27.

he took a pernicious and horrible custom as his infallible key to the interpretation of a message from God.

For it can scarcely be questioned that he was acting in the face of an earlier revelation. It is not improbable that we owe to him the preservation of the documents of the earliest prophets contained in the opening sections of this Book of Genesis.* Surely the beautiful visions of the creation must have been part of his treasure, and from them, he at least, had learnt the incomparable dignity and infinite preciousness of man made in the image of God. Besides, had he not the literature of the Deluge? Had he not read, had he not heard, what was said to Noah: "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man; Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He him." Ought he not, therefore, when the suggestion of a Satanic heathenism, "Slay thy son. God can give His angels charge over him, and return him to you," was made to him to have replied, but it is written again, "My son is made in the Divine image, and the Creator Himself forbids his slaughter."

But who are we that we should censure this great soul! Have not we added unspeakable burdens to our life—and what is far worse, to the lives of others by mis-reading God's message, and misrepresenting His revelation? Is not the victory of the Church, in spite of its blunders in reading its Great Charter, the standing miracle of these later ages? Has Christianity to-day a greater obstacle to its

*Cf. Luke i. 10.—"He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, *which have been since the world began.*"

progress than the bewildering confusion thrust into the exposition of the Book of eternal truth?

See; here is a man in difficulty. He seizes his Bible, opens it before him, espies a text that jumps with his feeling, and away he goes and flings his denunciations right and left on all who differ with him—he himself being Athanasius against the world! He, indeed, thinks he is resting on and following out the will of God; alas, poor man, he is leaning not to his own understanding, but to a floating whim, a mere caprice, and fails in clear intelligence and broad charity.

Another, reading into the Bible his ascetic spirit, converts Christianity into a doom-spell, the world into a prison-house, the affections into tyrants deserving of death, and daily living into a daily torture.

A third, in a day of bitter temptation and glaring failure, falls on the words in which Christ tells the hardened and light-resisting Pharisees of their doom, and forthwith lacerates himself with the whip of a Satanic literalism made by his own hands out of the sayings of the Righteous and Merciful Lord Jesus.

I do not wonder men complain of the time we take to understand and interpret our Scriptures; and of the confusing conflict of the professed teachers of Christianity! But friend and student of Nature, let me ask thee how long hast thou been in discovering the meaning of rocks and oils, trees and flowers, suns and stars! During what lengthening centuries did thy predecessors people the mountains with "Gorgons and Chimæras dire," read human fates in the movements of the stars, and dabble in magic because they had no science! And even with the keys of

all the Arts and Sciences at thy girdle, what dost thou know fully and above possible correction? Will not the most skilled worker with the scalpel and the alembic, and the lordliest genius of the scales, confess that he only knows in part? Catalogue, I pray thee, thy mistakes in reading the lessons Mother Nature has been giving to her numerous children for cycles of ages, before thou dost empty the vials of thy abuse on the slow progress we make in interpreting our sacred books. Better for *both* of us to confess that "to err is human," and nowhere more so than in reading aright the various revelations of God to the sons of men.

Is then, now let us ask, Is Abraham left in this day of trial and mistake to himself, or does the Almighty God meet him in his difficulty, and aid him in his dilemma? The answer is complete, and wanting nothing. Like as a father pities the errors of his children, and makes them the occasions for imparting correct knowledge, converts their blunders into the staves of a ladder by which they climb to accuracy of thought and goodness of life, so God counter works, neutralizes, and even utilizes, the abounding mistakes of men. Behold this old-world priest, as with a fine self-suppression he proceeds with undisturbed deliberateness to carry out his plan. Everything is ready—the wood laid, the lad bound, the hand uplifted—and suddenly and swiftly the voice that bade the offering, arrests the sacrificer, before the final and fatal act takes place. "Lay not thine hand on the lad, neither do anything to him, for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from Me." The real man is

revealed, not less, but more clearly, for the mistake that he has made ; and God in His mercy and discipline stands in the way of the full effect of the blunder Abraham has committed. It is like Him. He delights in mercy ; indeed, if He did not, what hope of progress were there for us men ? If He should mark iniquity, who could stand before Him ? If no work were fruitful but that which is sinless, and no service accepted but what is sifted and purified in aim, without any love of fame, or any taint of vanity, what expectation dare we cherish of finding favour for our labour ? If He did not atone for our iniquities, make up for our losses, neutralize the evil of our life, and even use it, to help on the regeneration of the world, would not dear hope itself be slain, and life cease from off the earth ?

And in doing this, God acts on a clear, definite, and sound principle, readily understood amongst men, and always commended where it is understood. For where was Abraham's mistake ? On the surface of his life, and not at its heart ; in the *form* of his offering, and not in its spirit ; so that he was in this day of temptation "a man after God's own heart," true, unfalteringly true to his conception of duty, inflexibly faithful to his conscience ; and ready to stand to his interpretation of God's will, even when it involved the death of his own and only son by his own hand. When John Huss was burning at the stake, an old woman came with trembling limb and laid a few sticks on the blazing faggots, and the martyr-saint, with a divine penetration, ejaculated, "O ! sweet simplicity." He beheld the purpose to honour God, and was more eager to recognize it, than to condemn the form in which it expressed itself. "*Abraham*

believed God"; that is the sum of the whole transaction, believed Him utterly, against all odds and risks, and was ready to do and dare anything he *thought* God commanded. Nothing could shake his trust! Had he not heard the divine declaration, "I am the Lord ALMIGHTY, walk thou before me, and be thou perfect?" Did he not regard Him as the Everlasting God, and had he not received Isaac after he had ceased to expect any children; surely, if he offered him in sacrifice, God could give him back again if He willed; "God could raise him up from the dead." Therefore, not once in his journey does a word escape his lips which tells of failing purpose or drooping faith. He assures his servants as he leaves them that they will come again. He tells Isaac in answer to his pathetic question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" "God himself will provide the lamb." And God reckoned this calmly persisting faith, this actual and suffering obedience for RIGHTEOUSNESS. But what else was it? Call you that a false reckoning? Is the crediting wrong? Are you of those who read that statement as though it described a juggling with words; and a setting over to a man's account of what is not actually due! God doesn't juggle with words or facts! He only reckons for righteousness what is righteousness. There is no imputation with Him. There was no false reckoning. As a sapling is a tree, as a child of a week is a man in germ, so real faith is righteousness in germ, and Abraham's offering is itself the noblest surrender ever made to the highest and best, save that Sacrifice offered once in the end of the ages to secure for us an everlasting redemption.

Are you surprised that such obedient faith is followed

by a fuller statement of the Abrahamic gospel, an enlarged revelation (fixed in a new name) of God, and the exaltation of the Hebrew Hero to the place of head and representative of the people, and of the fatherhood of the faithful all the world over! "And Abraham called the name of that place JEHOVAH-JIREH;" the Lord God *sees* His suffering and tried children, *appears* on their behalf, and saves them from themselves, and *provides* for necessities, which they themselves had in their folly created, as well as for those which belong to their condition. Such a gospel could not die. Wheresoever the story of Abraham is told, this also was reported for a memorial of him, and up to the undated day, when the last editor of this ancient book did his work, it was still said, in the pithy and proverbial language of the country—"In the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen," or as another renders it, "In the mountain, the Lord will provide," or to quote a third, "As He had pity on Abraham, so He will have pity on us"; or still more fully, "On Mount Moriah God provides for men and sends them help; as He of old did to Abraham, so He does to us now," or, finally, in the language of the blessing on the tribe of Asher, moulded by this very text, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Of the things contained in this record, this is the sum the more completely and really we give ourselves to God, and for Him, and for His work in this needy and suffering world, the more do we share the "pleasures" and powers of faith, and partake of the fulness of His strength, and grace for grace. God gives His best and most to the spirit of self-sacrifice. It is the test to which He submitted Himself, and the way He took to secure His perfect

and undimmed blessedness. "God so loved the world that He *gave* His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus gave Himself to a real and painful death in a spirit of obedience and self-denial, "and THEREFORE God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name." If our Master went that way to joy and glory, surely we, His disciples, must listen for the words: "Offer it for an offering;" offer work, play, home, business, pleasure, trouble, patience, faith, or hope,—offer him or her, son, daughter, husband, wife, friend, as an offering.

But we do not open our ears for such words. *We* make no *real* sacrifices to God. We enjoy His gifts, stock our homes with treasures, feast our hearts on His bounties, but we withhold our full, well-trained, and fire-filled personality from His altar. God asks for your child to be a missionary. He is ordained from birth to go forth, not to make a fortune, or build an everlasting name, but to be the real friend of the lost, the brotherly-helper of the needy; and you say, "No! it is too much! What have I been building this business for! I should have left it years ago, only I wanted it for him! The thought that he would carry it on has been my delight. I cannot." And so you thrust your mammon-sharpened knife through the youth's spiritual nature, and slay him in the name of wealth. Oh! if only we would take each new joy, every fresh delight, as a demand for more actual, real giving-up to God, our progress in holiness would be secured, our pleasures "would flow as a river, and our joys as the waves of the sea."

God bids us all offer *ourselves* to Him; there is the general law; but He does not make the altars on the map of our life all visible at once. They are there, but put in with 'chemical ink,' and have to be held before the fires of trial to make them appear. Don't think you have to go far for your altar. Sigh not for romantic occasions and dramatic scenes! Begin where you are, in the spirit of the loftiest of all prayers, "*Thy will be done.*" You boys and girls may start at the table to-day, by kind and thoughtful attentions, consideration for the sickly and feeble, an eager gladness to be of some use at home. Learn at once, my children, how to give up your own will, to please God and serve others. It will make life so much sweeter, and the days so much sunnier; and if the nights of trouble and sorrow come, some shining stars will be sure to cast their soft light on your spirit.

And Wife; whose name has just undergone the sad change to Widow! does not God say to you, "Offer me an offering" of patient trust and tender hope. Submit without coldness and without anger, suppress rebellious feeling, and accept the solace of a spiritual and abiding companionship, and say, though with tear-filled eyes and a heart that aches through every fibre, "O Father, my loved one is with Thee; I will *try* to be faithful for his sake and Thine. Thou art good and wise, Thy will be done!"

Or have you come to that part of your life-journey when health fails you and fell disease closes the door on a thousand joys and restricts to the smallest patch your cultivable garden! This is hard indeed! but be brave, meet your mornings with manly resignation. Suffer without resentment and without fear! Rest on your Father's love, and

what you know not now you shall know hereafter. His "strength" will not be missing, and you will leave in your history a new reason for faith in Him.

Brothers, whatever betide, let our steadfast souls follow Jesus, who, always keeping heart and life open that the Father's strength and grace might flow in and through, said, when He was tired and broken down by the weight of His vast burden, "Not my will, but Thine be done"; and as certainly as in that spirit of self-sacrifice we live and die, so shall we serve our generation in the purest and most fruitful way, prove His gracious presence and strength an all-sufficing support in trial, as well as an adequate explanation of human existence, and at length rise to the joys of a perfectly blessed life.

The question has been raised, why was *Isaac* so passive? The true answer is suggested by Canon Mozley, who shows that the idea of *individual* rights scarcely existed in Abraham's world. The son was the absolute property of the father. "It is as his own property that Abraham surrenders and sacrifices his son." Proof of the long continuance and wide range of this anti-Christian conception will be found in *Maine's Ancient Law*, c. v. The modern sway of the sacredness of *individual* rights we owe to Christ Jesus.

"THE Doctor told us my little child was dying. I felt like a stone. *In a moment* I seemed to give up my hold on her. She appeared no longer mine but God's. It is always so in such great emergencies. *Then* my will, that struggles so about trifles, makes no effort."

MRS. PRENTISS.—*Life*, 144.

"Fight on, thou brave, true heart, and falter not, through dark future, and through bright. The cause thou fightest for, so far as it is true, no further, yet precisely so far, is very sure of victory. The falsehood alone of it will be conquered, will be abolished, as it ought to be; but the truth of it is part of Nature's own laws; co-operate with the world's eternal tendencies; and cannot be conquered." CARLYLE.

"I know Thee, Saviour, Who Thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend:
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end;
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love."

C. WESLEY.

"In itself—Israel—God's warrior, was indisputably the higher name, befitting a hero, who strengthened by God, had endured the hardest conflicts, and achieved god-like victories." EWALD.—*History of Israel*, i., 344.

Jacob's Baptism of Fire.

"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed."

"And Jacob said, ... Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.". . . .

"And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.". .

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel."—*Genesis* xxxii. 7, 11, 24, 28.

Does this familiar, but deeply mysterious, episode in the life of Jacob, afford us any aid in the solution of the chief problem of life, the full acquisition and perfect use of Daily Strength for Daily Living?

I know it is an old-world story, and in its strange Oriental setting appears as remote from our modes of thinking and vital aspirations as the dress of an Arab, or the war-tactics of the Mahdi, from the habits and practices of English life to-day. Still, you know enough of the

practical spirit which reigns in this building, to be sure that if I take you into the Old Testament I shall never lose sight of home, or get beyond call of the real life we are now living, the difficulties we face, and the work we have to do. For I hold that saying of our poet-novelist, George Macdonald, to be as true as it is terse, "*Life and Religion are one, or neither is anything.*" If then we travel into Hebrew times, and hold fellowship with Hebrew heroes, it is solely because Hebrew teaching and Hebrew biography are, in their essence and uses, actually nearer to our inward life, in its struggle and hope, its repeated failure and renewed yearning, than all the gossip of yesterday's newspaper, the battles of the newest books, the "cases" settled in law courts and the business done in our marts of trade. With God and with principles "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." Souls grasp hands over the intervening centuries. Abraham sees Christ's day and is glad in it. We see Abraham's day and are stronger for its faith, and more daring for its victory. Thousands of years and thousands of miles do not part the man who comes here to-day, bending his whole strength to realize an often-dropped ideal, from that son of Isaac, who, nearly drowned in the storm-swept seas of his own craft and cunning, at length emerged a new man, and stood forth a prince of the Most High God, and one of the most powerful of all witnesses to the gladdening fact that our Father in heaven strenuously and wrestlingly works to cleanse us from the sins that have dyed us through and through, and sends His fires to burn the inveterate spell of the bad habits of a long life. Jacob is every man's brother, though some of us see the resemblance to ourselves more

vividly than others. He was, in many points, tempted like as we are, and he felt as we do ; but though a man advanced in years, and hardened in selfish cunning, he was, by the persisting and unwearied grace of God, made anew, re-constituted, born from above after the image of Him who created him for righteousness and true holiness.

Now that result, wherever and however secured, is religion. For religion is not an answer to the questions of the curious brain ; it is making men ; men of a certain quality, strong men who will trample under foot a false and corrupt ideal of living, and sieze, cling to, and pursue an ideal of ever-heightening and ever-advancing goodness and loveliness. And in all ages and climes that work is substantially the same — for Jacob at the ford of Jabbok, and Job in the whirlwind, out of which he hears the voice of God ; for Isaiah, prostrated by the vision of the Unseen Holy in the Temple, and blinded Saul in the street called Straight ; for Augustine in the cathedral of Milan, and Bernard in the monastery of Clairvaux ; for Luther in the Castle of the Wartburg, and for any and all of us this very day.

It is this touch of divinity that makes all living human biographies akin, gives them a perpetuity of being, and constitutes them a perennial inspiration for all earnest souls. Take out of the noblest life the presence of God, faith in the Eternal Father, aspiration for the true and the best, the battle for the weak and the oppressed, the powers of faith and the pleasures of duty, and it is as barren as a desert, and as unattractive as a bog. Leave God in any life, give His free Spirit some play, and however vehement in its blind partialities, exaggerated in its naked egotism,

intense in its antipathies, and even loaded with repulsiveness, yet the world will not willingly let it die ; nay, it will actually resent the un-Christian and un-Divine effort to drag into the glare of public day the weaknesses and follies and vices of the soul that has struggled hard to maintain its faith in the Eternal, stared into the Unseen till it is nearly blind, and fallen back in old age on the mother-taught prayer of childhood, "Our Father who art in Heaven."* This divineness is the peerless fascination and unequalled power for service of all Biblical biography. The view-point is God ; always God. Had not Enoch walked with Him, and stood in the elect line of God's revelations, his name would have been forgotten, like that of any one of the million infants whose life is a cry "in the night, and nothing but a cry." Noah's fame as a preacher of righteousness springs, not from his eloquence, but from his theme and spirit. Abraham takes his place as God's "friend," and if our Jacob had not submitted to the cleansing fires of God's love, he would have been washed by the swift waters of time into the sea of oblivion, and scarcely a sign left of his appearing. Jacob, the crafty supplanter, would not have survived if he had not become Israel, a prince who had power with God and men ; for "the name of the wicked shall rot, but the memory of the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." God does not write a Bible to exhibit how unutterably bad, men can make themselves, but how good they may become through His redeeming and re-making love.

Forget this in reading your old Scripture, and you will

* *Cf.* The discussions on the biography of Thomas Carlyle.

work fearful disaster in your conclusions, and render your task as irritating and fruitless as if you attempted to master chemistry and ignored the law of multiple proportions, or to interpret "the stars in their courses" and set at defiance Newton's Principia and the laws of motion, or to analyze the character of Arnold of Rugby and closed your eye to his intense, whole-souled, and absorbing religious earnestness.

I do not say the adoption of this view-point removes all difficulty. It does not. Souls are not easily read. The Divine hand-writing is often so over-scored and underscored, crossed and re-crossed by human letters, that we can neither make out the real meaning of the "copy" ourselves, nor find anyone else able to do it. "The heart knows its own bitterness; but a stranger inter-meddleth not." We have at least two natures—it often seems as though we had half-a-dozen—the voices within our souls are as confused and confusing as though several personalities were contending for the mastery within us. It is proof of exceptional skill to know what is in man; how much more power is needed to describe what God does with him?

But at least we may, guided by these principles, spell out of this description of a day and night in the life of Jacob these three things—first, that this is a crisis, a turning-point in his career. This Jabbok-ford is at once his Gethsemane, Calvary, and Mount of Olives; and his experience is, in a deep and true sense, his "conversion" from the craft and cunning and vulturous greed of years, to the sweet subjection of his will to the Eternal and his consequent victory over himself and his brother. What the

days under the juniper tree were to Elijah after Carmel; what Damascus was to Saul, who became the apostle Paul; what Erfurth and the pilgrimage to Rome were to Luther; what Elstow was to Bunyan; that the Jabbok district was to Jacob, the third of the Hebrew patriarchs.

Nor, secondly, is it less clear that GOD is in this crisis from first to last, and at every moment of these twenty-four hours. It is with a vision of God's angels on the path of life the day starts. It is to the Lord the one fear-filled prayer is offered. It is, though Jacob knew it not at first—as, indeed, who of us knows at once the face of the Father or recognizes the touch of His hand?—it is God who, taking advantage of this occasion, sets his soul afire, and fills him with horror at the all-investing flames. It is God who continues to urge him on in his self-torture, convicts him more and more of his sin, fills him with an anguish of spirit that lames him, and at length subdues his fixed rebellion against righteousness and goodness. God has "beset him behind and before and laid His hand upon him."

Thirdly, the crisis closes in the victory of the patient and loving Lord over the resisting selfishness of Jacob, and in God, "working in him to will and to do," so that exulting in his submission to, and acceptance by God, he pleads for fuller light as to the Divine character, receives a real blessing, though not all he craves, and advances on his way under the safe and prospering guidance of the Spirit of God.

Let us look more closely into these Jabbok scenes.

I. It must have been a welcome fore-gleam of approaching victory, and a pledge of the sustaining presence of Jehovah, "in the dark valley of the shadow of death,"

that, *as this day of crisis* broke on the pilgrim, "the angels of God met him." It was a cheering augury. The "Kingdom of God was at hand," and "hosts" of helpers within call. But then, as now and always, it was only through the gates of tribulation such souls as Jacob's—soaked through with the poison of cherished wrong—could pass under the Divine Rule, and enjoy the help of God's ministering spirits. They must be born from above. They have a baptism of fire to be baptized with, and they are straitened and agonized till it is accomplished.

Accordingly, the sun had not risen high in the sky when the spirit of Jacob was shaken to its very centre, with wildest alarms and fiery penitences, by the ominous news that his brother ESAU was swiftly descending with four hundred men, upon his path. "*Jacob is greatly afraid and distressed.*" His guilty conscience tells him he is about to be visited with righteous retribution for all his early treachery. His peril is prodigious. Everything is at stake. His future hangs on a thread. Wives and children, herds and cattle, the idolized gains of a long life of scheming and plotting, over-reaching and under-stating, depend upon his victory in this encounter. He is at his wit's end. The Rubicon is crossed. The bridges are burnt. Retreat is impossible. Doom is inevitable. What shall he do? He schemes and he prays, and he prays and he schemes, his whole soul in a maddening whirl of consternation and terror!

Ah! there is a wonderfully exhaustless fund of vitality in a human conscience. Drugged to sleep for years by the morphia of gain, yet the dynamitic shock of a new and unexpected event will rouse up all its dormant energy, fill

its owner with an unspeakable dread, and impel a furious and uncontrollable activity. For more than a quarter of a century Jacob has lived his life of selfish greed—a plain man, with his heart in his home, and his character respectable; but his scheming brain, set on "the main chance" like hungry vultures on the distant carrion. He has grovelled in meanness, told lies to his aged father, and profited by his blindness, taken advantage of Esau's passions, converted his foibles and follies into hard cash, filled his coffers out of his vicious propensities, struck his own and only brother when he was down—miserable coward! and rifled his pockets, to satisfy his money-greed; as alas! men will now, by the sale of intoxicating drinks, the distribution of filthy literature, and other unnameable ways of vice and shame.

Truly his offence was rank, but it was as foolish and needless as it was base. His nature was strong from the first, and his capacities for hard work so large that he could have gained all he wanted without resorting to craft and treachery, if only he would be patient in spirit, and cling to the right and the true. Men who have skill and capacity for cheating, mostly have power enough to win in the race of life, if they would run fairly and evenly, and not make haste to be rich. A little less hurry and they would save their souls as well as make their fortunes. Individuals like Esau do not conquer in life's battle. They cannot They don't want to. They ask for the *summum bonum* of the companions of the prodigal in the parable—*to enjoy themselves;* and they generally get it, if only for a little while, and leave the cunning Jacobs, the honest and faithful Josephs and Daniels, to obtain all they want. So, adding

his manifest folly to his cruel perfidy, Jacob found he had to pay heavily for all his wrong-doing. Men never do get "something for nothing" in this world. God is nigh at hand, and His eternal laws fail not. Every shilling the wealthy patriarch has won by his over-reaching and trickery burns into his soul with unquenchable fire. An awful pain is in every nerve. Like Macbeth, he hears a voice cry to his conscience—"Sleep no more; Jacob does murder sleep." His eyes are wide open. Every fibre in him quivers with agony. Each evil deed rises up before him, like an incarnate fiend, and glares upon him like a fury, and from his soul goes out one short, sharp, pang-filled cry to God—"Deliver, O God, deliver!"

It is in this agonizing fright and utter turmoil Jacob *prays*. Urged by the things He suffered, even Jesus "offers up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who is able to save Him from death;" much more may we expect Jacob to "weep and make supplications,"* and in the glowing fervour of his soul, fed by the cleansing fires of fear, self-reproach, and penitence, stir up himself to take hold of the Almighty Deliverer. De Quincey goes so far as to say, it is only at such perilous times men ever really pray, and then even the worst cannot lock their lips against the irresistible petition. Likely enough Jacob's first brief, deep prayer "Deliver, O deliver!" was as selfish as any of his subtly planned transactions with scheming Laban, or his clever artifices to outwit easy-going Esau; but sorrow makes men sincere; horror drives souls to honest self-searching; and

* Hebrews v. 7; Hosea xii. 4.

peril forces the cry that tells of crushed pride, deepened humility, new-born gratitude, sheer dependence on God, the beginnings of the new and better life.

Indeed, Jacob's prayer, selfish as it is in its spring, is the proof that God, the redeeming God, has got at his soul through his conscience. In some way or other, the loving Father will find the heart of his prodigal child, and turn his face towards the nobler ideal for which he is made; and if He cannot *draw* Jacob to Himself, He will *drive* him (if he will be driven) in utter desperation upon His limitless power and pity. Brothers, in the divine love-fires, be patient and hopeful! Do not despair of God. Be assured He will not leave a solitary grain of gold in the furnace. Let the flames burn on till you are cleansed from all defiling vices, separated altogether from the dross of selfishness; and the purified metal of a new life reveals the loving discipline and gracious wisdom of the Great Refiner!

II. And now, following Jacob into the midnight scene, let us take it out of its Eastern setting, translate it into the hard, but useful, imaginative, but real prose of our Western life. What means this terrific conflict on the northern side of the brook Jabbok, begun in the thick darkness and weird silence of the night, and carried on till the break of day, between the Patriarch and the Strong but Unknown Traveller? What is its significance?

In plain English, this, assuredly; that Jacob having gone to God in quaking fear, God holds him, and will not let him go, goads and harrows his soul, till his heart swells and is ready to break; convinces him over and over of his sin

urges him to such a relentless and soul-consuming struggle with his self-will, that he feels as though he is held in the grip of a giant and cannot escape. He resists, he struggles, he writhes, and in his furious contortions is at last lamed and helpless; and, therefore, compelled—compelled, mark it! to trust himself, and his wives, and his children, and his all, to God.*

In what measures that issue in trust and hope was against the inveterate habits and fixed tendency of Jacob's nature and experience, we cannot even guess. He had been a fighter all his days—a fighter by himself, and for himself, and a fighter who always won in the long run. He bore the name of "Heel-grasper," or "Supplanter," from his birth, and had battled many a time with the boy Esau; and though often beaten, as we may well believe, by his strong-limbed, energetic, and impetuous brother, he had, as weaker boys will, made up in cunning what he lacked in physique, and obtained by stratagem what he could not secure by fair fight. He had battled, too, for his wife Rachel, patiently and unweariedly, as only true love can, and he came off more than conqueror through his sustaining affection. How his wits had been sharpened by his partnership with Laban, where diamond cut diamond, and cheat battled with cheat, was proved by the large fortune he was now taking with him. Even his religion was a wrestle and his devotion a business. Now and again, in visions of the night, his soul was gladdened with the

* "It was not a natural or corporeal wrestling, 'but a real conflict of both mind and body, a work of the spirit with intense effort of the body' (Delitzsch), in which Jacob was lifted up into a highly elevated condition of body and mind resembling that of ecstacy, through the medium of the manifestation of God."—Keil & Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, i. 305.

upward look and the onward gaze ; but the quest for the Holy Grail ended in a mercenary bargain, and his devotion slid down to the low-levels of an offer of ten per cent. to God as a bribe on his bounty. Fifty years' sway of the things seen and temporal over a man who had fought every inch of his way up to that point, and such a strenuous discipline as he had known, might well require a soul-wrench, tremendous enough to crack even the largest sinew of the body, if he is ever to be lifted to the pure and serene life of trust and self-sacrifice.

Men differ. Some are yielding and compliant as the gentlest woman, others are "blood and iron," and will not bend ; some cling like the ivy, others stand up in their sturdy independence like the oak ; some are trustful and look as naturally for God as a babe for its mother, others doggedly resist every call to reliance on others, and can scarcely believe they are alive unless they hear the clashing of swords in actual conflict. These energetic and self-depending natures thrive in a climate such as ours, like the vines on the hill-sides of the sunny south. Everything favours their abounding self-will, and nourishes their faith in themselves. The strife for which they are eager is always at hand. Life is a wrestle. Day and night their sleepless vigilance is on the track of some foe. See, say they, pointing to their achievements, "The great Babylon business we have built, the suburban house we have reared, the gardens we have planted, the fame we have made. See, we are the architects of our own fortune." Nor do they fail to remind us that the world was no soft clay waiting to take any form they pleased to give it, but iron ore requiring to be smelted in the seven-times heated

furnace of their labour, run into the moulds of their fashioning, heated again by their toil, and at last battered into shape and use by their repeated blows. Impossible is it, by any effort of the moral imagination, to estimate the gigantic faith in his own all-sufficiency which a creature of five-feet-six, and weighing a hundred and forty pounds, may develop and carry within him! Still more impossible to say what prolonged inward struggles, what pacing to and fro, what intensity of grief, what paroxysms of prayer, what utter break-down of power, may be necessary to teach such a believer in himself that goodness is more precious than gold, self-surrender nobler than self-reliance, trust and love and humility better than suspicion and selfishness and pride, and that man without God is man shrivelled, wasted, dwarfed, and cramped, and ceases soon to be man at all.*

Channing, speaking of his experience as a tutor at Richmond, at the age of eighteen, writes: "I lived alone, too poor to buy books, spending my days and nights in an out-building, with no one beneath my roof except during the hours of school. There I toiled as I have never done since. With not a human being to whom I could communicate my deepest thoughts and feelings, I passed through intellectual and moral conflicts so absorbing as often to banish sleep, and to destroy almost wholly the power of digestion. I was worn well-nigh to a skeleton. Yet I look back on those days and nights of loneliness and frequent gloom with thankfulness. If I ever struggled with my whole soul for

* The finest illustration of these truths I know in the realms of fiction is *Tom's Heathen*, by Josephine R. Baker.—Hodder & Stoughton. A story of admirable power, and rich in spiritual teaching of the highest quality.

purity, truth, and goodness, it was there. There, amidst sore trials, the great question, I trust, was settled within me, whether I would obey the higher or lower principles of my nature—whether I would be the victim of passion, or the free child and servant of God. It is an interesting recollection that this great conflict was going on within me, and my mind receiving an impulse towards the perfect, without a thought or suspicion of one person around me as to what I was experiencing."

In strange language, a different voice, that of Carlyle, describes the same "volcanic, earthquake-bringing, all-consuming fire" through which he passed on his journey from the EVERLASTING NO to the EVERLASTING YEA, saying: "A nameless unrest urged me forward.—I felt as if in great haste; to do I saw not what. . . 'Truth!' I cried, 'though the heavens crush me for following her.' The painfullest feeling is that of your own feebleness—felt in bitter, protracted death-agony through long years—the Everlasting No saying, Behold thou art fatherless, outcast, and the universe is mine (the Devil's); to which my whole Me now made answer 'I am not thine, but free, and for ever hate thee.' It is from this hour I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth—or Fire-Baptism—perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a MAN!*

In terms more familiar, and more luminous, an old saint left on record his witness to a similar experience, "By an evil loving of myself I lost myself, and by seeking Christ alone, and purely loving Him, I found both myself and Him." All the shepherds and kings of the earth who

* Sartor Resartus, 113-117.

have brought forth judgment unto victory have passed through these fires, met the Strange and Unnamed Traveller, felt the touch of God that has shattered their faith in their dexterity, and craft, and personal sufficiency, and found delight in seeking by the straightest and directest course for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, believing that all other needful things would be added to them.

Son of man, is God thy Father wrestling with thee? Hasten to capitulate. Resist Him no longer. Surrender on the spot! Accept His free and full forgiveness! Open your heart to the fires of His love and holiness. Let God take the lead in your life at once. He is able to deliver; trust Him. Why wait till you are broken up by disease, and have nothing to offer but a dying gasp of penitence and hope! Now is the accepted time. Cease your self-assertion. Abandon your antagonism. Set your life parallel to His will. Cry not merely, "O! God, be merciful to me, a sinner," but say, "Here am I, send me, use me as Thou wilt;" and at once your enemy shall be vanquished, your course prospered, and yourself constituted a messenger of God, and a master of men.

III. Only a few sentences on the final scene. God has wrestled *with* Jacob. Jacob wrestled *against* God; but at last yielding, his soul is suffused with the blessedness of the man whose trust is in the Lord. Gladdened by the assurances of the Divine favour, and *strengthened* already by the Divine love, Jacob lays firm hold of God. God forthwith welcomes his grip of His power, and at once responds to it, giving him a new name as a sign of his new

and conquering nature; preparing the heart of Esau to accord him a welcome, and training and educating him, so that he becomes the consecrated missionary of the Divine Unity, one of the minds of culminating influence in the development of religion, and a prolific source of nourishment to the life of the world.

Faber asks, with mingled beauty and force—what is it will make us *real?* and answers, "*the Face of God will do it.*" It is so. Israel is a new creation. Jacob is dead. The old craft and treachery are destroyed. The brilliance and glory of Eternity has eclipsed the charms of time. Dark as the night was, Jacob passed through it, saw the face of God at day-dawn, and became himself, met his brother with serenity, and spent the rest of his days in the love and service of God.

Have you seen that Face? Have you seen it in Jesus Christ? Men live in actual contact with the truth of the gospel of God's mercy and help, and yet no more know and enjoy it than the sparrow hears and understands the message passing along the electric wire on which it is perched. For seventy years Jacob had dwelt in the atmosphere of the clearest and fullest revelations of God in the heathen world. The teaching of Abraham and Isaac had been within ear-shot. He had dreamt dreams, and seen visions, entered into covenants with, and made promises to God, and yet it was not till he surrendered himself to the Unknown Spirit, who wrestled with him in the gloom and stillness of that decisive night, that his nature opened by penitence, self-accusation, conscious weakness, and clinging trust, received the truth as it is in God, wrought it so closely with his inward life that it became a part of him,

controlled him, gladdened him, and gave him a new and triumphant future.

Friend, again I ask, have you seen the Face of God? Be assured that Face is now looking upon you! Think not you have to go in quest of it into some strange land! Jacob did not wrestle with God at all, nor even try to detain Him, till God had wrestled with him and triumphed. Never suffer the diabolical doubt to enter your mind, that God is unwilling to help you, reluctant to open the stores of His life and send them flowing through your weakened veins. We have not to wrestle with HIM to overcome His unwillingness, but with *ourselves* to cleanse our hearts of all self-seeking, and to lift our nature to that supreme prayer, "Thy will, Thy way, Thy work—not mine." He is more willing to give than we are to receive. God commendeth His love toward us in that, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The life and death of Jesus is God Himself wrestling, even unto the death of the Cross, with a wicked, self-willed world to secure its everlasting salvation!

"IT is good that fear should sit as the guardian of the soul, forcing it into wisdom; good that men should carry a threatening shadow in their hearts, under the full sunshine; else, how should they learn to revere the right."

ÆSCHYLUS.

"Reverence is the angel of the world."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Rabbi Meir Gabay and R. Menahem de Ricanate say there are two kinds of fear; one servile, dreading punishment; the other, reverential, inspiring awe, such as what is entertained for a sovereign without dreading him, but induced by the knowledge of the grandeur and excellence of the sovereign one serves."

The Conciliator of MANASSEH BEN ISRAEL, 76.

"The average scientific man worships just at present a more awful, and as it were, a greater Deity than the average Christian." PROF. SEELEY.—*Natural Religion.*

The Fight for Social Purity.

"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"—*Genesis* xxxix. 9.

Nothing thrills like a battle. Each man is a born fighter. The necessity of struggle is laid upon us, and therefore, our sympathies are rarely stretched to further tension than by the sight of contests, which are the types and prophecies of our own. Even the names of old fields of carnage and strife are still electric. The lapse of centuries does not rob Marathon of its spell, or strip Lake Regillus of its fascination. Bannockburn and Marston Moor, Agincourt and Waterloo, rouse attention, create emotion, and feed patriotism; and though we never felt so acutely or hated so bitterly the mischiefs of War, yet it cannot be denied that our growing desire and increasing work for the

universal sway of the beneficent Sceptre of Peace is only another form, and that the noblest, of the divinely-ordained struggle in which large breadths of our human life are passed.

Our widely-read tales, stirring dramas and biographies, lay hold of us by their contests ; and ascend to the highest range of power when the battle is for spiritual ends, fought with spiritual weapons, and from spiritual motives. It is as the hero of a life-story is led up into successive wildernesses to be tempted of devils and of men, that we forget ourselves and lose our conscious being in that of the warrior who fronts the foe. With absorbed interest and solicitude we follow the fortunes of the pure-hearted man, who is sorely bruised by the rude weapons of slander, loses heart and hope, forgets God, hates man, and grovels after money with insatiable greed, until, all unawares, he is suddenly accosted by a mysterious stranger in the form of a little loving child, who, commencing her attack upon his heart, fights on, till through her sweet simplicity and simple sweetness, she displaces for ever his deeply-seated hunger for pelf by the benign and healing presence of a pure human affection ; and so enables *Silas Marner* to advance as a victorious soldier "led by a little child."

And what too are the great religions of the world, that inspire reverence and sympathy, and suggest hope, but records of the fiery conflict for truth and right and good, into which men have been pushed by the Spirit of God ? Our Bible, assuredly, is a book of battles, and in this respect is without peer. The God of the Hebrews is the Lord of Hosts. "Jehovah is a Man of war," says the elder Scripture, with that robust naturalness which characterizes it ; and

how indeed could a God of perfect goodness be aught else, in a world where evil is rampant and defiant, and man, his struggling and erring offspring, is in hourly danger of being seized and subdued by sin and death? The Cross is the type of all life. Jesus is a Captain, who has Himself fought and won the precious pearl of obedience and purity "by faith," and therefore has ascended to His place as the Leader and Commander of His faithful hosts. Doubt not, so long as this law of "struggle" lasts, men and women will come, with quickened interest, for fresh inspiration, enlargement of faith, glowing courage and steadfast soul, to a Book which narrates "the wars of the Lord" against sin and misrule, wrong and impurity, with a fulness and reality not only unsurpassed, but for ever unequalled.

Joseph's fight for social purity is one of the best known of "the decisive battles of the world." The grand out-leap of defiant refusal to do wrong, of this young warrior has seized and held the imagination of mankind for ages. The sudden and complete moral recoil of this gallant Knight of Purity from the defiling touch of the depraved adulteress, who has been dogging his steps and laying her sensual bait day by day, has passed into the imperishable stores of the world's moral force. There is such a reality in the description of this heroic jump from the clutch of the poison fangs of the Egyptian profligate, who debases the name of wife; such pathos in the long and false imprisonment with its fortitude and faith; such wealth of surprise in the subsequent deliverance and exaltation, and yet withal such striking humanness all through, that we feel as though it were the story of some young

man, who, recently arrived in our own Metropolis, from Scotland or Wales or the Midlands, gains entrance to a large firm, passes to the first position in the establishment by his industry and clear-headedness, high principle and capacity; there meets and resists violent and repeated temptations, but is afterwards borne away to the Old Bailey to suffer incarceration, not for wrong done, but because of the successful malice and venom of one whose solicitations to evil he indignantly and persistently opposed.

My chief business, however, this morning is not with the general features of Joseph's history, but if I can, to TRACE TO ITS SOURCES THIS WARRIOR'S STRENGTH IN HIS BATTLE FOR PURITY. I want to know whence he derived his impulse to right action. Here is the flowing river of his life, where is the fountain? This is the sword, "the Excalibur" of his conflict; where did he obtain it, and how? What advantages had he that we have not, for days when temptation is so prolonged, that by its very tediousness and nearness it threatens to weary us into yielding; or when by the wild fury and impetuous dash of the tempter our stability is imperilled, where can we get immediately the momentum for so splendid a leap beyond the reach of our destroyer?

Now, in answering these questions, the utmost care is requisite to deal fairly with the facts, and not to project into Joseph's lot advantages he could not possibly possess. We too often think of the far-off Biblical heroes in a way to make them of little or no use to us, and indeed sometimes, so as to make them only provocative of the unbelieving complaint that our condition is not so fortunate as theirs. We talk as though they had facilities we have

not, and found the ways of God less rugged, and the heights of holiness less steep than we do. We say, did not Abraham hear God's voice, just as a boy hears his mother's and was not the Lord his visible guest, as a friend at the table is ours, and was He not his leader, as palpably as a Swiss guide to an Alpine traveller ; and we forthwith close our vision on the prodigious difficulties that beset him, the wider area of his needs, and the thousand and one advantages in living a believing and obedient life, which God in Christ Jesus, and "God in history" has given to us. O we say, "did not Jacob dream dreams and see visions at the crisis of his life, and Jehovah Himself wrestle with him, till He so pervaded him with a conviction of weakness that trust became a necessity, and self-renunciation a rapture!" and we proceed to lift these men out of the matter-of-fact, prosaic, tempted, and suffering life we are living, and place them in a realm apart, as though God were not "*the Living God*," and the same, in His readiness to aid us with His great strength now, as of old! We are still slaves of the sense, and restrain the Holy One of Israel by our want of spirituality and faith.

It is fortunate for us we cannot, if we have any willingness to give up our prepossessions in favour of the Word of God—we cannot do that sort of thing with Joseph. The annals of his life are, in *expression* as well as in fact, so wholly after our manner that we must feel him to be one of ourselves, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; tempted and treated just as we are, and without any *sources of power* which are not also open to us, and open to us more abundantly. He has no special revelations. Not a single word, so far as I know, is addressed immediately to him,

Not a solitary vision has he seen in which God assures him by name, of His help. He has no Divine guests like Abraham: he is no prophet like Moses. He has not the strong tones and emphatic insistance of the Sinaitic legislation. The Seventh Commandment has not been proclaimed amid all the splendour and awe of a manifested God. Revelation exists, but it is not a printed volume, hardly a written pamphlet; only a winged tradition, nestling in the warm seclusion of loving hearts. In fact, Joseph is nothing more than a village lad, of some ability and much dreaming; not wanting in a certain precociousness, due to the foolish favouritism of his father, and an uncertain conceit springing from his grand ambitions, fed too, by his father's recital of the sublime possibilities of Israel's future. Like many others who have travelled from rural scenes to the metropolis, he doubtless felt many a bitter pang as he entered the famous city of the Sun, Heliopolis, not from choice, but stolen by his brothers and wrenched from the home in which he was his father's darling; not as a free youth, but as a slave, sold by those who should have protected him, and disposed of again by his Midianite owners to the Chief-Commissioner of the State Police, and installed in a servant's position in his house. He must have had real force of character, for Potiphar, with the quick eye of a master for worth, soon promotes him to be major-domo, and entrusts him with the management of his entire establishment. It is here his temptation meets him, in this place of confidence, this refuge from desolation, in these days of conspicuous prosperity, away from home and kindred, and without any opportunities of communicating with them; and it is in

this state of sheer want of the ordinary human sources of power that he fights, and wins, and comes off more than a conqueror.

Nor was he only bereft of the customary aids to virtue. Any man who held, as Fichte says the Germans did at the beginning of this century, that "the only necessity for a God is that He may look after our interests," would be sorely tempted to say "Is there a God at all, and if there be one, does He care for suffering men? Why am I tortured thus? Threatened with death twice, all my brothers against me, banished from my mother and father; a slave! Where is the God of Abraham and Isaac! Where is the God of my father Jacob? What has become of the glittering promises on which he used to talk, and I dream? Surely God hath forgotten me, or these billows would not go over my soul; He has shut up His tender mercies, or He would prevent the fierce pursuit, day by day, of this unchaste woman!

Not so did our hero think of God. "The Lord was with him";—with him, dwelling in his heart by faith, as He is with any of us; with him as available and useable power, working in him "to will" this brilliant deed, inspiring him to utter this luminous word. Our question, therefore, is answered in the one word into which he sums up the whole feeling of his soul, "how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against GOD?" God is his strength and his salvation. He can do all things through God.

"Yes, yes, that we know, and that we tempted men say to ourselves"; but it seems to us, often so vague and unpractical? Tell us HOW THE POWER OF GOD BECAME POWER IN HIM; what did he do to set the Divine forces to accom-

plish human work, to turn faith into an energetic impulse against wrong, and a conviction into a conquering deed! The electricity is in the heavens, yea, in and on the earth, show us how to seize, detain, and store it in our homes and use it where we want it, and how we want it."

That is my chief aim in this course of sermons, and trusting in the help of Joseph's God and guided by Joseph's words, I hope to show you that the strength of the Lord Almighty becomes available just as He is to us,

(1) The inspiration of the profoundest fear of violating His clearly-heard Word;

(2) Himself completely identified with our personal purity; and

(3) Regarded as revealing His will concerning social purity in the facts, institutions, and conditions of human life.

I. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" At once we recognize the presence of the Holy God in this scene. He is its light and glory, its power and victory. God the Holy fills the entire field of vision, and Joseph is strengthened with might in the inner man by an all-pervading awe of Him. His heart throbs with a vehement solicitude not to offend God, not to violate His will, or in the slightest particular displease Him. That is the fire that burns with such scorching heat in these words. That is the flame that leaps up in his heart in cleansing force. That is the source of the mighty passion by which in a moment, and at one throw, he flings far behind him the corrupting bait of the temptress. It is not hatred of the woman! though that might have been excused. It is not anxiety for his own reputation first and

foremost, though that is not without its influence. It is not even solicitude, before all things, to maintain his integrity in his trust as the steward of Potiphar, though that too operates with great and decisive energy ; but it is the recognition of God. He cannot sin against Him. There is the impassable barrier ! That Sacred Presence for ever blocks the way ! This Authority ruling in and for righteousness utterly shuts out all possibility of yielding, and impels the tempted man, at lightning speed, from the neighbourhood of danger.

Whatever, then, may be our final judgment as to the place of "the fear of God," *i.e.*, of the reverent dread of disobeying His word, in a pure, noble, and consecrated life, it cannot be denied that it is one main element in Joseph's conquering power. It is not the whole of it, by any means ; but it is one facet of the many-sided life ; one source from whence he obtains his irresistible might ; one auxiliary to his steadfast purity.

"But surely," says one, who recalls the blood-curdling terrors of Arab superstition, the false fears of heathen religions and the paralysis of conscience wrought by a slavish and ignorant dread, and who has caught the full breeze of the evangelical motive of love and been borne along towards righteousness with delight," you are not going back on "fear" as a source of daily strength ! that is as unworthy as it is untimely ! "Perfect love casts out fear." Joy unspeakable and full of glory, is the goal of all true religion ; brightness and beauty are the angels on the path of life, and unclouded skies and warm sunshine gladden and sustain the traveller. The dispensation which declares "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" has

given place to the good news that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. The characteristic message of Christianity is "fear not." The law of Moses is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And though Isaiah warns his disciples against making the gods of the heathen the object of their fear and says "Jehovah Sabaoth, Him shall ye count holy, and let Him be your fear, and Him your dread," he finally sets his second mission to the cheering key-note "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

True! all true! But is it not also true that the diamond of Revelation has many sides, that the needs of weak and suffering men are numberless, that their resources are manifold and not one of them to be ignored, that "fear" is still a powerful auxiliary to virtue and holds important rank amongst the "means of grace" and of spiritual power, in the New Testament as well as the Old, in the lives of men tempted to impurity and selfishness to-day, as in that of the long-resisting Joseph in the house of Potiphar? *

For, certainly, this intelligent and love-born fear of disobeying the Divine Word, and of failing in the discharge of a divinely directed work, though

* "As an original power of the human mind fear may be exalted and ennobled by its object; and here that object is the highest and the holiest conceivable—God. As all dangers culminate for man in this one, that of disobedience to the clearly-known will of God, it is self-evident that fear directed in all purity and vividness to its highest object, God and His will, so far from being without value for man can never be sufficiently watchful and strong." EWALD *Revelation; its Nature and Record.* p. 30. Translated by Prof. Goadby. "Fear God," says Emerson, "and where you go men shall think they walk in hallowed cathedrals."

it occupies a *surbordinate* and *auxiliary* position in the Gospel, is never lifted wholly out of it. Though it is only the "*beginning*" of wisdom and not the end of it, the all and in all; it always holds its ground as a part of wisdom, and is never dispensed with, either by those, who, in their conscious weakness, are eager to avail themselves of every possible power to augment their instant and victorious recoil from evil; or those, who, in their enthusiasm for perfection, like Michael Angelo, "count nothing a trifle" which goes to secure it.

Christ in directing His apostles in their missionary work, nourished their zeal and multiplied their daring by saying, "Fear not" the "wolves" who may devour your bodies; but He inflamed their martyr-devotion by the word,—"rather fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."*

Paul, in a letter that overflows with tender affection and yearning love, bids the Philippians "work out their salvation for themselves with a nervous and trembling anxiety,"† *i.e.*, do not think you know all that has to be done, or are proof against mistake. Be alert, quick in attention, always on guard. Even though your knowledge is wide, faith strong, and love intense, take care lest you forget yourselves, and unconsciously drift—like weeds in the river, into disobedience to the voice of God, or self-deceivingly cling to a purpose He forbids, or cherish a spirit contrary to His, or "keep back part of the price" you have pledged yourselves to give to Him and His work. Perfect holiness in the fear of God. Make it full and complete, in the

* Matthew x. 28. † Lightfoot.

hallowed and purifying atmosphere of the dread presence of Him who hates all iniquity and never can be reconciled even to "little sins."*

Fellow soldiers, I cannot feel that fear of doing wrong, and dread of not doing all we ought, are obsolete as working forces in life! I know too much of the subtilty of evil, of the difficulty of working on the higher ranges of Christian service from motives absolutely pure and untainted by self-seeking and vanity, the ease with which the spirit slides into doubt and despair of God, and forgets the fulness of His promises and presence, of the possibilities of secret sins; and I have seen too much of those who "profess and call themselves Christians," not to welcome with all my soul the Divine caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," by a shot from an unseen foe, by mistaking a traitor for an angel of light, by opening the gates of Mansoul to some of the king's enemies, or by collapse of power through long and wearisome watchings with an ill-fed and ill-nourished spirit.

Sublime men are only made by sublime motives; and of motives, "Love is Lord of All." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is the first and great commandment, and the second comes a long way after it; but it does come, it must come, for love and fear are the positive and negative poles of the same electric bar, and are both forces convertible into aids to holiness. Love rules in the home, and its sunshine is the life of all who dwell therein; but fear of marring the domestic peace, spoiling the domestic purity, or poisoning the domestic joy, is a temper that pervades

* Phil. ii. 11-12. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

and chastens, hallows and enlarges the household life. Our soldiers fight for the love of country ; but how unspeakably they are goaded forward in the severity of battle by the dread of losing their country's flag ! In the finest types of married life, it is not till years of perfect communion and of character-assimilating love, have made husband and wife a complete unity, and blent soul with soul, and will with will, that all fear is gone,—if indeed it ever is. Certainly, in the earlier stages it is a spur to that continual and anxious attention to aid, and not to hinder, in developing the one life, which finally becomes the gracious habit and beautiful form of the domestic ministry. "Wherefore," we Christians, "having received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have the grace of thankfulness, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe ; for our God is a consuming fire." "Following after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord : looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God."*

It is not, then, too late in the world's history to fall back on the element of fear of doing wickedness and sinning against God, as an available power in the recoil from evil. Too late ! Assuredly not ! When men like Professor Seeley, in his *Natural Religion*, complain that we have lost the Hebrew Awe from our Christian life, and must perforce, look for its reinstatement to the teachers of Science ; when poets lament the decay of reverence in spite of the growth of knowledge, when moralists assure us that the element of

* Heb. xii. 28, 29, 14, 15.

wise and righteous authority is passing from the family, and when politicians talk of the total disorganisation of our social life through a clamorous insistance on rights to the neglect of duties, it is time to ask whether Christians are not failing to set forth the *whole* counsel of God, dwelling with an exclusive and partial emphasis on the ministry of Love, and omitting to inculcate that faith in the immediate presence and immediate authority of the Eternal God, the Asserter and Vindicator of the eternal law of righteousness !

In our Scriptures God is no mere human convenience. He does not exist simply to care for us. He is the moral Ruler of our Race ; the home and dwelling-place of Law ; the Defender of Truth and Right, not making Right by His command, but always commanding what is Right; the Lawgiver of the world, battling against evil with His great strength, condemning sin by the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son ; forgiving it, blotting it out and hiding it, making it the beginning of a new life of faith and consecration, upholding all those who fight against it, and for purity ; maintaining the cause of the just, relieving the oppressed, the fatherless, and the widow and so showing Himself the Real, Living, and Personal Power, the loving Father of men, working for righteousness, and working eternally. "Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord ; neither are there any works like unto Thy works. For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things ; Thou art God alone ! Teach me Thy way, O Lord ; I will walk in Thy truth ; unite my heart to fear Thy name ;" and so will the thought of Thee check sin, deepen reverence,

inflame the passion for holiness, and make my feet swift to run in the way of Thy commandments.

II. Notice, again, this passage gives evidence of a large access of energy to Joseph's conscience from his *perfect identification of God with his own personal purity.* "By faith," *i.e.*, by an act of the moral imagination, he places himself instantly in the realized presence of God, and the temptation becomes appallingly hideous to him, simply because it is a solicitation to *sin* against his God. It is also "a great wickedness" against his kind and confiding master, a grave and irreparable wrong to himself, an unpardonable blow to the guilty woman, a crime against society; but it is first and foremost a *sin* against *God.* "How *then*," he reasons, his soul melted into one stream of fiery logic, "how *then*, can I do it? Impossible! Come what may of resistance—expulsion, imprisonment, death—all must be faced and borne rather than yield. God and Purity are one. I cannot detatch myself from Him; I dare not, I will not;" and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the battle is over, the victory won; and having taken fast hold of purity, and not let her go, she gives the light and cheer of the Divine presence in the prison, at length opens the dungeon gates, advances him to honour, and finally places this brave Soldier of Purity on the throne of national usefulness. Surely we may add a verse to the eleventh of Hebrews, and say, "By faith Joseph, when he was tempted in the house of his master, resisted, not fearing the consequences of his act, for he endured *as seeing Him Who is invisible.*"

"Seeing Him Who is invisible" in the visible purities

and righteousness of life, in the strife with wrong, and in the triumphs of goodness. That is the principle that requires to be lifted again into its ancient and rightful supremacy over our judgments of all that is unfair, untrue, impure and unjust. God is Righteousness, and Truth, and Goodness ; the Champion of every "lost cause" that is good, and we ought so absolutely to identify Him with the Right, the Good, and the Holy, that we shall see His name on every right act, feel His impulse to every good word and deed, and rejoice in His inspirations for every holy thought and desire. The agony of our penitence must voice itself in the bitter lament—"Against THEE have I sinned."

"'Twill save us from a thousand snares" to see God in everything good and pure, and the Great Foe of God, the devil, in everything bad, and foul, and miserable. We shall not be the victims of words, disguising sin by calling it indulgence ; excusing wrong by representing it as a venial weakness, a customary offence, and "what everybody does ;" defending robbery of the poor under the plea of the sharpness of competition, and the cheating of a buyer by the diabolical maxim, "Let the purchaser look after himself." Nor shall we parley with the tempter and discuss the possibilities of mischief to ourselves, looking out for precedents and statistics and proofs, that after all the wrong is only slight, and the offence condoned by consent ; but we shall go straight to the very heart of evil, see it in its essential immorality and injustice, and start from it as from the bursting of a bomb.

Moreover, we shall gain time, and time is power in a crisis of temptation. Delay is fatal, the decisive blow must be

struck at once or it will never be given. Life is too short for most of us to construct elaborate ethical systems. Passion will not wait while the reason is satisfied, but rushes heedless to its objects. Temptation is so fierce that a swift and instantaneous rebound is all that will avail us. Everything depends on acting with unrelenting decision, uncompromising resoluteness and overwhelming energy, and I know of nothing that will produce these qualities like a strong and active faith in the living and righteous God, Himself absorbingly interested in and bound up with every righteous cause. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Blessed are the pure in heart. They SEE God.

III. I have said Joseph differed from Jacob in that he had no Bethel visions, and from Abraham in not hearing the Divine Voice, but he had the *Divine Facts of Life and in them he read the Ideas and Will of God.* The oldest of all Bibles, the Bible of human experience was open before him, and he read, marked, learnt, and inwardly-digested its contents, and found it profitable for correction, for discipline, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness, furnishing him with some real aid, for his good works.

It is a bad use of the written Bible which blinds us to the teaching of Home, hides from us the heavenly meanings of Marriage, and closes against us the libraries of National movement and History. Our Scripture, brief as it is, has this peerless excellence, that it sets all our institutions, the Church, State, City, hamlet, marriage, and family life all in God. They are divine; based on a divine plan, intended to achieve divine results. Every man's life is sacred, for there is a divine

idea to be fulfilled in it—the idea of purity, and self-control, of sweetness and strength, of character and service. Underlying marriage there is a thought of God, and in all the offices of mutual love, in the reasons for forbearance and patience, in the occasions of suffering and sympathy, this life-union is tending to inspire self-supression, develop tender affection, nourish purity, and put ease and grace into our human life. Joseph, accordingly, read in his office of steward, God's prohibition of impurity, saying, "How *then* ; seeing the place I fill, the duty I am bound to discharge, and the confidence reposed in me, how *then* can I do this great wickedness and sin against God !" The seventh commandment was already written in letters of light in that home, and made more lurid by the dark spirit that dwelt in it. His very greatness was a dissuasive from evil, and he saw in the dignity of his position a protest against the slightest connivance at wrong. Girt about with these forces, his

> "Strength was as the strength of ten
> Because his heart was pure ;"

clad with zeal as a cloak and drawing motive from a present God, glorious in holiness ; and every fact in his surroundings, becoming eloquent with divine teachings, he effected his conquest with the ease of a giant and the completeness of a king, so giving proof of that plenary power by which he finally won the name of Zaphnath-paaneah, or Saviour of the world, and became one of the types and prophecies of the coming Author and Finisher of our faith.

Oh, that men would consider the facts and institutions of life in the light of the divine ideas they reveal ! that each man saw his double duty of personal purity and of protecting and upholding the threatened purity of the

world ; and all held the violation of chastity as great an offence as forging a cheque or robbing a till ! The Bible of human experience is not closed ; but illumined by the focussed light of all the ages, re-asserts the truth stated over and over and over again in our Old and New Testaments, that nations and states, families and individuals, who sow to the flesh do of the flesh reap corruption, the utter break-up and destruction of their life. Men and women are alike made in the image of God, put on the earth in equal numbers, redeemed by the same Sacrifice, renewed by the same Spirit, necessary and complementary to the development of the most pure and perfect life of each other ; and it is an insult, an injustice, and a curse for any Legislature to provide and sanction a traffic so flagrantly opposed to the Divine Law as that which now discredits the British Statute Book. Let us cherish the noble ideal of a pure world and enrol ourselves in the army of social righteousness. *This is the next great crusade.* The struggle against intemperance has passed into a thoroughly-organized, consolidated, and wide-spread agency and cannot be put back. The struggle against impurity has only recently started and it calls aloud for workers. Let us join it, in the faith and spirit of Joseph, and contribute our full strength to the sacred cause, inspired by a stern and relentless hate of evil, a hallowing reverence for the Captain of our Salvation, an unwavering faith that God and Purity are one, and a resolute chivalry in defending the weak, protecting the exposed, and saving the lost.*

* It is a ground of assured hopefulness that the movement initiated by Miss Ellice Hopkins is spreading over the world. See *Christian Leader*, January 29th, 1885.

"ANY true reform must know the drift of the ages, and work in the line of the eternal movements of the Universe." "Humanity is a unit; we must go up or down together."

SAVAGE.

"Whenever the people have taken up the Bible, and allowed their minds to be thoroughly imbued with its teaching, they have come forth strong with the spirit of reform and equalization." "Every Christian who understands and earnestly accepts the teaching of his Master, is at heart a Socialist."

EMILE DE LAVELEYE.—*Socialism of To-Day*, xvii., xix.

"This age, which has pursued happiness as our being's end and aim, now discovers that pessimism is the only thing that will wear. Just as the age which pursued (in Germany) beauty, ended by doubting its existence."

NEVINSON.—*Life of Herder*, 306-7.

Divine Socialism.

"JESUS WAS FAITHFUL TO HIM THAT APPOINTED HIM, AS ALSO WAS MOSES IN ALL HIS HOUSE . . . . . HE THAT BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD. . . . . MOSES WAS FAITHFUL IN ALL HIS HOUSE AS A SERVANT, ... BUT CHRIST AS A SON OVER HIS HOUSE, WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE IF WE HOLD FAST OUR BOLDNESS AND THE GLORYING OF OUR HOPE FIRM UNTO THE END."—*Hebrews* iii. 1—6.

(1) "He that built all things is God." But God is not the only builder. His sparrows that sit on the house-tops are already beginning to gather the materials for the family nest; and joyfully toiling bees have had the reward of their labour in the protection afforded them by their self-constructed and well-compacted hive. Man, God's child, like his Father, is always building. The instinct is strong in him, and build he must even if he has to pull down before he can get a start. He rears edifices

for business and for worship, palatial abodes for art and science, and cathedrals for reverence and adoration. Eager to explain all things in heaven and earth, he constructs his systems of philosophy ; rich in the progeny of fancy he stores them in poetic mansions of exquisite beauty and enduring charm ; and so bent is he on this constructive work, that when all else fails him, he, like Joseph, the son of Israel, builds "castles in the air." Still, He who built all the builders, and all the things they build with, is God. He began in the undated past, and He keeps on in sundry ways and with diverse materials from generation to generation. Suns and stars are His palaces, the earth and the moons are His footstools, and the wide universe is His paradise. To-day is built up out of yesterday and all its predecessors, and the vast and prolific morrow will be constructed out of the incomprehensible and mighty to-day. "The heavens declare His glory" ; but human history far excels the heavens in the eloquence with which it proclaims His excellent name, "Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens."

(2) "Know ye that the Lord, He is God. It is He who hath made us and not we ourselves." We are His people, the sheep who feed upon His rich pasturage, the children who feast at His table. "We are His workmanship," created of old, with a body that is a finely built machine, opulent in resources, and apt for our uses ; with a mind of surprising capacities ; perception and reason, memory and conscience, hope and trust, reverence and love, and above all with a spirit that links us with the Infinite, makes us susceptible of being "created anew in Christ Jesus," after

the type of His holy life. He built Adam and Paul, Moses and John, Jacob and Peter, Isaiah and Augustine, and all the chief building men of the ages.

The Home is His work, built as the primary institution for choking in the germ the destructive self-seeking of the human race, and developing that love which forgets self, considers all, and creates an atmosphere of domestic and social ozone that refreshes and exhilarates everybody who breathes it.

(3) But God's SUPREME BUILDING WORK goes far, very far beyond that unit of civilization, the Home, and seeks to construct out of the individuals of which the world is composed one vast MORAL COMMONWEALTH, a spiritual republic, a divine "House"; in which selfishness shall be killed outright, and God and Freedom, Righteousness and Love, reign for ever and ever; a "House" with servants like Moses, sons like Jesus, faithful in all things, and forming an "elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"; a free, aggressive, and holy spiritual community; a perfect form of society, into which nothing enters that defiles, or makes a lie, "a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; a body compacted together of self-suppressing, world-redeeming men, enthusiastically dedicated to the full use of their gifts and possessions, for the broadest and highest welfare of others.* THIS IS THE DIVINE IDEAL, the sum and crown of the long and patient labours of God upon men, the image and pattern of the things, towards the realization of

* 1 Peter ii. 9.

which all the pulling down and plucking up of nations, and states, and churches, and all the reconstructing of systems and societies, stedfastly and assuredly tend. The tabernacle of God will be with men. God's "House" is being built.

That our Bible is a book for individuals is not to be denied, but it is obvious that its key-word is "Kingdom," and its great pivotal Idea the establishment of a spiritual society. It was not written to tell how God made the globe, but how He made "man," and is making humanity in His image and likeness, and by what agents and processes He has been, and is still working towards this final result. "No man lives to himself" in our Scripture. No biography is reared, obelisk-like, in a desert. Individuals are welded into compact bodies of men. It is Israel and not any Israelite that solicits our attention. Jerusalem is more than any Jew. The living House is dearer than any single stone in it, and its massive proportions, splendid design, and varying fortunes, are always in the Divine thought. *Genesis* is the story of the election of a people, "in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed;" *Exodus* is the nation on the march; *Leviticus*, its ritual; *Numbers*, its census; *Deuteronomy*, the consolidation and re-announcement of its law; *Joshua* and *Judges* tell the successes of its first efforts at government; the *Psalter* contains national ballads and spiritual songs; and the *Prophecies* give the political appeals of pure-hearted and inspired statesmen. And though the newer Scripture asserts the unspeakable worth of an individual soul with unequalled emphasis, yet the same Social Idea is dominant, the *Gospels* show the relaying of the foundations of the same edifice, the *Acts*

exhibit its sudden and marvellous ascent before an astonished world, the *Epistles* set out its legislation and ideas, and the *Revelation* paints in mystic colours its chequered but triumphant future. The whole Book is, as the best expositors have felt, the History of "the Kingdom of God." The Divine "House" in plan or preparation, in promise or in advancement, in its builders or in its "living stones," is seen everywhere, from the promise made to Adam in Eden, and then re-announced to Abraham, on to the sunset-scene of splendour and of peace in the Apocalypse.

But nowhere is this conception more strikingly present than in the teaching of Christ. It is the radiant sun of His system of thought: the text with which He starts, as well as the goal to which He travels; the enforcement of His mission and the explanation of His mighty and world-embracing sayings. "The kingdom" is of "heaven"; not of the earth though on it; does not dependlike the great world-empires on the strength of armies, and the superiority of external force, but on ideas, principles, and spiritual powers; it is a "kingdom of God," and not of the prince of the power of the air; a rule in righteousness and goodness; it is "at hand," in touch already with the spirits of men, and destined to embrace all souls and all human interests under its regenerating and elevating sway. Beautiful Ideal! Nothing can compete with it for fertility or harmony, efficiency or truth, fulness of promise or satisfaction of result. A flake of snow has a fascinating loveliness when seen to be a symmetrically-built crystal. I have been delighted to behold the singularly regular and proportionate structure of the sea-urchin. Even a bird's-nest is fearfully and wonderfully made. The human eye is a well-ordered

world, with manifold functions and powers, each of which is necessary to the other, and adds its contribution to the pleasure of seeing. A "system of philosophy" is a mental edifice that inspires admiration; but of all sights to create awe, and pervade with quickening emotion, there is none like that vast, complex, wide, independent, enduring organism, human society; none except the "house built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief Corner Stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple of the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

(4) "*Whose house are* WE"—we Hebrews recently become followers of Jesus; but not the less belonging to God's building; for He goes forward amid the wreck of systems, the decline and fall of nations, the overthrow of ecclesiasticisms, the sacking and burning of Jerusalem, with unbroken persistence, undisturbed, calm, and sure, though not swift approach, towards the eternally pre-ordained top-stone. The Judaic edifice, built with much gold and silver and precious stones, and unmatched in all prior ages and in all other lands for its solid basis, strong walls, and potent enchantment, has in it much wood weakened with the dry-rot; and hay and stubble swiftly decaying. The fires of God (*Heb.* xii. 29.) sweep through the structure with a fierce and cleansing blast, not a grain of gold is lost, not a precious stone is marred; but lo! here! an ampler edifice, reared on a wider foundation, richer in its architectural beauty, rises into sight as the dwelling-place of the sons of men. "Hidden away" (to quote some words uttered years ago) "in a small walnut shell," says a beautiful Arabian story,

"a diminutive fairy tent was carried by a young prince to his father. First they put it in the council-chamber, and it grew till it spread its covering over the king and his senators. Away they carried it to the court-yard, and again it spread, till the king and ministers, family and servants, and all the household, stood beneath its welcome shade. Next they took it to the plain beyond the city where the multitudinous army was encamped, and marvellous! again it lengthened its cords and strengthened its stakes, and spread out its canopy over the far-extending host. It was flexible to every need, expansive to every requirement. Each new demand was met by the display of new and larger capacities. So Christianity came in the contracted shell of Judaism, but burst forth on the day of its appearing over Parthians and Medes, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Jews, and proselytes of every land. Then Peter set it up in the house of Cornelius, and it extended its wonderful awning over all the Gentile world, till it sheltered "saints in Cæsar's household," strangers scattered abroad, soldiers and senators, masters and slaves, old men and children. The Greek, in his subtilty, scowls with scorn, and then accepts its covering; the Roman, in his haughtiness, persecutes and then honours it; the barbarian, in his ignorance, wonders and then adores; men everywhere find it full of the limitless energies of Christ, filled with inexhaustible resources, and capable of an expansiveness as broad and deep and high as the growing needs of the human race."*

Nearly two milleniums separate us from that first Christian-Hebrew "House," but the same language describes

* Jesus Christ and Modern Social Life.—p. 32.

us "if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end!" Ah! blessed are we if we know our day, and see clearly our work in it! Fortunate indeed, all who read aright their commission from the Eternal, and know on what errand God has sent them here! Still more happy those who listen for the voice of God above all the din of human strife, and follow His leading resolved not to

"bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up
And steer right onward."

(5) Whence it follows, if you are able to hear it, that in the truest sense God is the first Socialist; the Creator and Inspirer of the social spirit; the Creator and Inspirer of those powerful personalities who have evoked, directed, and partly satisfied that spirit by a free, healthy, and beneficial development; the Revealer of the laws on which a genuine socialism may be based, and the methods by which it may be attained; and the Author of that gospel which has done more to create motive and inspire practical enthusiasm for the real welfare of men, than all other systems and agencies and persons put together. History reveals God, sustaining each effort in the ancient world to secure healthier modes of living, pulling down false and man-destroying organizations, shattering hoary Oriental systems, Assyria and Babylon, Greece and Rome; creating Israel as His inheritance, a unique spiritual community; and then displacing it because of its corruption by Christianity, in which the nearest approach to the Spiritual House of humanity is made, and from which must come the motives and enthusiasms for the solution of our perplexing social problems.

(6) Two workers of unapproachable greatness and matchless power stand out with decisive significance as social creators and organizers. Many builders have done excellently, but Moses, a faithful servant in the House of the Father, and Jesus, a faithful Son, have excelled them all.

The making of Israel was in the hands of Moses. The making "of all things new" is the work of CHRIST.

The descendants of Jacob leave Egypt a race of suffering slaves, coarse, cowardly, and captious, feeble, fickle, and foolish, but under the long and patient discipline of their Prophet-Leader they slowly became a body, with one heart and soul, one aim and spirit, cheered by a Divine system of truth, guided by a righteous code of laws, and nourished and strengthened in the bracing air of freedom and responsibility. "There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses," and the sum and crown of all His labours was the creation of this God-governed and God-taught community.

Evidently God meant him for a social builder. His personality was massive, energetic, richly endowed, creative. He had the genius of a leader and the training that fitted for affairs. Sent to the best school in the heathen-world, he became an accomplished Egyptian scholar, and graduated in the various wisdom and manifold learning of their universities. Nothing could have been better. God sends His greatest workers to the most diverse schools. He can do but little with narrow men. Versatility is power. He Himself is many-sided, and those who serve Him in high places must be like Him. He has abundant strength for us if we only know how to receive it, and will teach us by men

who have garnered the experience and culture of the past, and then help us to leave them far behind at some future period, owing to our acceptance of His fresh light and obedience to His will. Moses owed a large debt to the men who taught, amid much confusion and indefiniteness, that "God is One; the One who has made everything. God is a Spirit, God is the Everlasting. No man has learnt to know Him. God is father and mother. God is compassionate to those who love Him.*

But no university can make a man. All the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians will not give birth to a creative mind. Men may load themselves with lore till they stoop beneath the weight of their accumulations, and yet fail to lift a care from the heart of the weary or impel a single soul an inch on its way to God. The real building of a man is within. It is in the solitude of the desert of Sinai the soul of Moses is thrilled and swayed by the power of religion. It is in the infinite calm of the deep awe-creating spaces of the clear Oriental sky, and in the subduing stillness of communion with the Eternal, that he acquires his great strength. Forty years in an Egyptian college and court would have issued in little more than fret and fume, and passionate deed, without the forty years of spiritual education amid the silences of Horeb.

At the end of that long period there came to the prepared man the overpowering fires of the Divine Revelation, and forthwith He was installed as God's Prophet, and the People's Deliverer. At once He is sent as the answer to the cries and laments of men, chafed and oppressed by a

* BRUGSCH—Religion and Mythology of Egypt, 96—9, quoted in Expositor. Third Series—I, 153.

cruel bondage, to break their fetters, to initiate a vast national movement, and to labour through forty years of building-work to create a New Society. Thus it is God who makes him, sustains him, speaks to him His will, gives him Aaron as his spokesman, maps his course, writes his laws, and when his work is done, finds his successor in Joshua, the son of Nun. Brethren, that God is our God for ever and ever. I do not and I will not believe in a dead God. It is only a fragment of the Gospel that says God *was*. God *is*. He is the living God, irremoveable from our needs and sorrows, sympathetic with our yearnings for a perfect life, responsive to our call for leaders, the Creator *to-day* of our real statesmen, of the true builders of our moral Commonwealth, be they in the senate of legislation or in our places of worship; dwelling in distant lands, struggling to shape crude and chaotic peoples into order and strength, or preaching righteousness and peace and obedience to spiritual laws at home. The God of Moses is with us, the God of Israel is our Leader.

(7)—(*a*) Moses speaks for "a distinct Deity, a definite God." "He is a faithful servant in God's house:" God's steward and messenger, called up and dedicated by Him to his task of forming an original community, at once political and moral, spiritual and theological; a society built from basis to top-stone on GOD. Not Moses, but God is the bond of union. Not Moses, but God is King. Not Moses, but God gives the law. Not Moses, but God leads the people. Not Moses, but God is Judge. The whole strength of the administration is in God; and every bit of power the prophet has is used to bring the people—all the people—to God for all things.

That supreme conception for us men—God—determines not only the individual, but the social life of men. Build up a society on the notion that man is an animal, God a fiction, righteousness an expediency, and immortality a dream, and you kill hope, create despair, blight the blossoms of love, sap the sources of faith, extinguish reverence, annihilate public responsibility, public purity, and public devotion. The Atheistic basis can never support a perfect form of society. Where there is no vision of God, the people perish. Contempt for religion breeds contempt for human duties, and cruelty towards human lives. The Coliseum is the most eloquent witness to the material greatness of the Roman empire ; but it is coincident with, and illustrative of the period of the greatest moral degradation of the Roman people. You cannot have a healthy and progressive society without a distinct, clear, and sovereign conception of God. All social workers, whose work abides, build on the deep and fundamental truths of the Divine Nature.

(*b*) No incident in the life of Moses shows the splendid largeness of his spirit more impressively than that in which some young men (Joshua amongst them), with characteristic hero-worship and hot impatience, protest against the free movement of the Spirit of God in man, and the full expression of the prophetic energy ; and he meets their policy of repression with the instant exclamation, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets !" Freedom was the atmosphere in which the spiritual life was to be nourished. Each soul of man is sacredly inviolable. No man may fetter it. It is open to the access of God in His fulness, and must be fully trusted,

for God is more than any man, and His action in and on men will not brook interference. An unrestrained activity and free outlet for the spiritual life of men, is at the basis of the Mosaic economy.

(*c*) But the possessors of this freedom are under law to God. "The law came by Moses." Israel was "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth." That Word was a Revelation, not only of Him who gave it, but also of human duty, of a way of conduct to be pursued, of a spirit to be cherished, and of a rightness of life to be achieved. It confronted every man as a claim for unswerving loyalty to holiness, upright purpose, reality and trueness of spirit, religion and worship, for God's sake. "Be ye holy for I am holy," described life's highest aim, and enforced its adoption by the highest reason. Every truth in the Hebrew religion became an imperative command, a "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not;" and its Great Teacher laid the stones of the "House" He built on the broad foundations of an eternal righteousness.

(*d*) Nor is love absent from the Leader's work. In magnetic and all-mastering flame it leaps out in a deed of death at forty. At eighty it appears in the emancipation of a nation of slaves, by his courage and skill; afterwards it shows itself in the provisions for the alien and the stranger, in the ever-open door for foreigners, in the self-suppressing prayer, "Blot me out of Thy book, but save Thy people," and in the missionary fervours that glow in his prophecies and prayers. Moses, indeed, was faithful in all His house, as a servant, and built up, as Ewald says, "for the first time in all human history a whole nation,

prepared to put itself under obligation to live hereafter only in accordance with true religion and her requirements, and to look for salvation in all time to come only from loyalty in its religious life, and the love of the true God, which this loyalty pre-supposes." Better foundation than that can no man lay—GOD, FREEDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE; and on every part of it is prophetically written the name of the COMING CHRIST.

(8) But the chief purpose of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is to show that Christ is a greater Builder than Moses. Greater than Moses! Weigh the significance of that saying. Reckon up the forces of this mighty man of God. Take in the full range of his gigantic work. Estimate the difficulties he faced and mastered, give full credit for his plan of social life, trace in all its details and issues the community he constructs, see its long vitality, and assess the immense contribution he has made to the moral wealth and spiritual energy of the whole human race. "Salvation is of the Jews," and of all men Moses did more to make the Jews than anybody else.

In what, then, was Jesus greater than Moses? In the basis on which He built? No; for both built on the same. In the spirit in which He did His work? No; for both could say, "It is my meat to do the will of my Father, and to finish His work." In fidelity to His trust? Yes; but this is not in the writer's mind: but rather the fact that *Christ proves Himself to be nearer the founts and sources of spiritual power;* can use them as Moses could not, and bring them to play on the consciences and wills of men as Moses did not; or, in the language of my text, where Moses is a servant, Christ is a SON,—the well-beloved Son;

where Moses is a steward, and speaks and works from that distant position, Christ is the Only-begotten One, Who is in the bosom of the Father, and speaks and works out of that sacred intimacy and mysterious Oneness ; and, therefore, there is a copiousness of energy, a fulness of grace and truth, a wealth of spiritual force, that puts the Society of Jesus immediately into a condition of unbroken compactness, irrepressible activity, burning zeal, martyr-like devotion, and self-sacrificing toil ; such, indeed, as makes it speedily the astonishment and the salvation of the world.

(*a*) Did Moses speak of a "definite Deity?" Christ reveals the Father, declares Himself to be so absolutely one with Him, that anyone who sees Him, the living, human, real Nazarene, actually sees the Father, and may find in Himself an open way to that Father's presence, the possession of His truth, and an influx of His life ; so that all vagueness about God disappears in the clear and bright beams of His radiance, all doubt is excluded by the certitude of His Spirit's teaching, and all craven fear is suppressed by the soul's sight of things unseen and eternal. God is nigh at hand ; not on Sinai's peak, but in the streets of Jerusalem, along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in the very Christ Whose four-sided picture we have in the Gospels, and Whose presence fills our hearts. Therefore, "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Christ's view of God as the Father and Saviour of all men, and of all alike, is the fullest Gospel men have yet seen, and makes the amplest provision for all the needs of the individual and social life of mankind.

(*b*) Did Moses build on the heights of freedom? Christ much more! It is to His Incarnation and Sacrifice we

owe the knowledge of the unutterable worth of one soul, the marvellous possibilities of one corrupted and lost human being! It is He Who declares the unsearchable riches of man, and sets the weakest and worst in a large spiritual freedom. From Him comes the impulse to liberty. He gets rid of the slavery of the body, for He brings master and slave to one confession, one pardon, one family, and one Church, and brings them as *equals*. It is His society which abolishes all fetters on the mind, and establishes freedom of soul and of speech, freedom of the press and of politics. "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed."*

(*e*) Is Moses a Legislator? So also is Christ. He did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fill out and realize their plan; not to demolish their often-dropped ideal, but to take it up and embody it in the life of men. He leads to higher ways of action; to patience, forbearance, forgiveness and self-devotion, for the sake of the weakest and worst; and what men could not do or suffer under "the law" they accomplish with ease and grace under the Gospel. Nothing won the men of the Roman empire like the purity and meekness, the forbearance and courage, of the saints; nothing is more needed to-day for a perfect social life, than an influx of the power which bears such fruit.

* The consciousness of freedom arose first in religion, in the inmost region of spirit. It is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence. . . . . Freedom first arose among the Greeks; but they and the Romans likewise knew only that some men were free, not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle knew not of this. . . . That Freedom was an idea which came into the world through Christianity, which recognized that the individual as such had an infinite worth.—HEGEL.

(*d*) That power is the love of God shed abroad in the world by Jesus and shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. In this all confess that Christ is without a rival. It is incontrovertible that He creates motives and inspires enthusiasms for practical ends with a completeness that out-distances all competitors, and leaves Him without a peer as the Creator of a society in which the holiest affections have sway, the Reconstructor of a world which is itself the best exposition of the old and yet ever new, saying "God is love."

(9) Since Christ Jesus the Son of the Father, is greater than Moses the servant of God, in that He furnishes the one thing that was lacking—viz., MOTIVE-POWER; and furnishes it on a scale of limitless magnitude, and with a fitness for human need that leaves nothing to desire, "let us hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope to the end," and so prove that we are of this Divine House. Certainly, we need have no misgiving as to the completion of this Sacred Edifice. God's Commonwealth is as sure to be established as the heavens and earth are built. Only let us give His Gospel free play; treat it as containing the key to all our social problems as well as to our individual uses, and it will prove itself as victorious over the difficulties of humanity as it has signally triumphed in the experience of numberless individuals. Christianity must become a power in our corporate life. For ages it has been primarily a personal force, and secondarily a social one; the next work to be done is to make it master along the whole line of our social life. And to do this we must apply it with thoroughness and follow it without fear to its full issues. Its spiritual methods must never be ignored. We

must regenerate from within. Respect must be shown to the sacred manhood of men, and no temporary expedients for relief adopted to the hurt of man's free and independent action. We must not cripple him in helping him. He is a man, not a machine ; a soul in a body and not a body in a soul. Do not relieve him of his burdens by carrying them for him, but by giving him heart and strength to carry them himself. Put not your trust in violence. Catastrophies are not progress. Innovations are not always improvements. Do not countenance the idea that "ancient rights" will atone for modern wrongs, or that the iniquities of our forefathers will condone the injustice of their children. Be just. Right and not expediency is our law. A socialist without righteousness may be very kind-hearted ; but he is not the less a real foe to his country and his race, by so much as he is dishonest and untrue. Make your legislation helpful as well as fair, repressive of evil, and of temptations to wrong-doing, protective of the weak and exposed, but don't expect too much from the alteration of land laws and the redistribution of the fruits of labour. Israel had a land law of great merit in its Jubilee-year arrangements, but we do not know that they were ever carried out, and if they were that did not prevent the decay of the people from irreligion. They ceased to believe in and obey God, to respect each other, to do right and love justice, and the best legislation the world has seen did not keep them from becoming a bye-word and a reproach to the earth.

Neither may we expect the mere conflict of individual self-interests to produce the welfare of the people. Competition is a poor panacea for a sore and bruised and bleeding

world ; only a little better than the policy of a universal almshouse. "Industry must be moralized—infused with a spirit of social duty from top to bottom, from peer to peasant"—*i.e.*, men must *do* their business for Christ and in Christ's Spirit, and not solely or mainly for themselves.

In short, we must accept Christ as our Pattern Builder, and co-operate with Him in spirit and in method, and our labour shall not be in vain "*in the Lord.*" Patiently, and as intensely loving our work, but loving more those for whom we work, we must build in the spirit first, and from that to the flesh, and not from without inwards, making even our most mechanical and outward acts alight with the radiance,and aglow with the heart of pure love.

(10) But recollect, we only belong to that "House" in so far as "we hold fast our boldness" and do not fail in brave deeds, in bold initiative, in courageous persistence, in the speech and work that vindicate and back our confidence. God has no room for cowards and idlers. Resent, therefore, the false and delusive notion that you have no share in the efforts of your fellows to secure a perfect form of society on earth. No share ! Why, Christian men should be the first and most devoted students of all social questions. Too spiritual to undertake such work ! Shame ! It is not beneath God ! how can it be beneath you ! Rejoice to be a co-worker with Him and remember that no political system can be final, that the best will always need the renewing of spiritual fervour, the baptism into a divine righteousness, and the loftier enthusiasm born of the love of God and souls. No one should be so prolific in bold effort to ameliorate the whole condition of

man, as he whose duty it is to be filled with the mind of Christ.

(11) Partnership in that "house" requires another quality, viz., that of holding fast "the glorying of our hope" *i.e.*, our *exulting hopefulness.* "In social things," says John Morley, "we may be sure undying hope is the secret of vision," and it is also the secret of patient work. "We are saved 'socially' by hope." Amid all this conflict of human passion and opinion, where wild schemes and frantic measures, violent threats and revolutionary surprises, dynamite upheavals and Nihilist outrages, God's work of salvation and regeneration goes on, 'without haste and without rest,' towards its long since predicted consummation. He is in the midst of the nations. He rules and will not suffer His counsel to fail or His eternal purpose to be put off. His "Kingdom has come," and is still coming as of old, "without observation" from many; and with false observation from more; its signs being misread and Satan expected, when lo! it is God Himself Who is at the doors. Let us work on in hope, and we shall see God, and exult in the assurance that He, the Lord of all the ages, will perfect that which concerneth them and us.

HECTOR going forth to fight Achilles, is invited by his mother to take the luscious wine:

"To whom great Hector of the glancing helm:
'*No, not for me, mine honoured mother, pour*
The luscious wine, lest thou unnerve my limbs,
And make me all my wonted prowess lose.
The ruddy wine I dare not pour to Jove
With hands unwashed; nor to the cloud-girt son
Of Saturn may the voice of prayer ascend
From one with blood bespattered and defiled."

POPE'S *Homer, Book* vi.

"But what avail'd this temperance, not complete
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquished?"

MILTON.

The Secret of Samson's Strength.

"And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times. . . . . And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him . . . . And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. . . . And what shall I more say, for the time would fail me to tell of . . Samson . . . who through faith . . . waxed mighty in war, and turned to flight armies of aliens."—*Judges* xiii. 25; xiv. 6; xvi. 20; *Heb.* xi. 32-34.

"Tell me," said the wily Traitress to Samson, the Israelite Chief, whom she had entangled in her toils, "Tell me, where thy great strength lieth"; for adroit as she was, she could not trace his immense and incalculable power to its real source, and though bribed by the silver, and goaded by the craft of the defeated and irritated Philistines, she failed, in her first and second attempts, to lay bare the secret of his irresistible strength.

Samson was not transparent to the vision of those who were nearest him. His true nature was a riddle they could not solve. His phenomenal prowess was not written in the lines of a vast and unwieldy body, or, as imagined by some, in the flowing locks of his hair. It was no mere matter of exceptional physique, of massive thews and sinews, of Titanic proportions visible to every eye. Although, we may well suppose

"A mighty man was he,
With large and sinewy hands,
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Were strong as iron bands."

Yet he was no child of the giants, trusting to his stalwart form and ponderous lunge for his successes; no Goliath of Gath, standing more than ten feet high, wielding a spear like a weaver's beam, and by the monstrous hugeness of his frame inspiring dread of his blows*; no Hebrew Hercules going through his twelve labours by the sheer force of thoroughly disciplined muscle. As Milton says, Samson was the "strongest of mortal men."

"Whom unarmed
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid;
Ran on embattled armies clad in iron;
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear,"†

*Josephus represents Goliath as measuring seven feet ten inches, and says he was "truly an enormous man." Lushkin, "the Russian giant," is said to have stood eight feet five inches, and to have been the tallest man of modern times.

† *Samson Agonistes.*

but assuredly he does not owe his place in the Revelation of God to extraordinary brute force, gigantic build, and layer upon layer of compact flesh, or Delilah would have had no difficulty in accounting for his invincible power, and the Philistines would not have been bewildered by his terror-spreading achievements. There was more in him than met the eye, or the question would not have been repeated with such despairing urgency, "Tell me where thy great strength lieth?"

Did it spring from the dignity and exaltation of his lot?

Samson was a "Judge" in Israel, the "Saviour" of his tribe, the Liberator of his people, an "uncrowned king"; one of those elect military and moral leaders, raised up in an era of gross barbarity and wide-spread lawlessness to repress irreligion and godlessness, subdue the foes of Israel, call the people back to truth, and goodness, and God, and prepare them for the acceptance of law and order at the hands of His earthly representative, a Divinely-given King. But Samson's strength lay no more in his position than in his body. He had to make his opportunity rather than to take it. He was not born to greatness nor was it thrust upon him. He stood alone, without followers, save such as felt his personal magnetism and were eager to join the bands of a capable leader; without organisation, except what he himself could extemporize for his emergencies; and without influence, beyond that which was consequent upon his successive and sustained victories. Whatever, then, may have been the indebtedness of this popular hero, it is undeniable that his position in the tribe of Dan gave him no advantage whatever.

Therefore, we repeat Delilah's enquiry and say—if neither in the limbs he used, nor in the place he filled, where then lay his great strength?

THREE ANSWERS EXIST: One in the OLD TESTAMENT; one in the NEW TESTAMENT; and another in the NEWEST TESTAMENT of all.

The *first* is in the few glimpses we get of Samson's long history in the four chapters devoted to his career in the book of *Judges*.

The *second* is in the brief but distinguishing notice accorded him in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he is bracketed with Gideon and Barak, Jephthah and David, as one of those illustrious worthies who, "through faith, subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness."

The *third* is in the current life of our own day, in the great personalties through whom the living God still works His will, and builds up "His house"; in the organs and instruments and institutions He employs for advancing His redeeming rule in the hearts of men and transforming the whole life of mankind.

But these three are ONE in fact, though given at different dates and in different terms, and each serves to make the other more manifest and serviceable.

I. The first response, with all the uniqueness and definiteness of inspiration, brings us face to face with God. The historian of the Judges, with characteristic simplicity and directness, brevity and force, traces Samson's power, by one single and swift step, to Jehovah, and credits his marvellous triumphs to the mighty and immediate movements of the Divine Spirit. His birth is a Divine incident

and his nurture the Divine care. He is reared according to the directions of God, and whilst still a young man "the Spirit of God moves him," "strikes" him repeatedly and with increasing force, as the smith hits and welds the glowing metal on the anvil with his hammer; "pierces him" through and through till his pain-born patriotism is unsupportable and he flings himself against the Philistines with the crushing weight of an avalanche. From first to last the hero's life is invested with the supernatural. The light of a higher realm dances in the cradle of the smiling babe, forms a halo of glory about his youth, flashes with startling brilliance across the heavens of his manhood, and though it is eclipsed for one brief moment, yet ere he passes out of sight, its scorching radiance once more arrests us, and he parts from us amid destructive manifestation of spiritual force. Even his marriage with a daughter of Tinmath is "of the Lord," and serves the supreme purpose of his life. The exploit, in which single-handed "he rends the lion as he would have rent a kid," was due to heaven-descended courage. It is the Spirit of God leaping upon him with a bound, and surprising him with its wondrous energy, that hurries him along as he slays the oppressors of Israel with a terrible slaughter. Wearied and despairing after the fierce conflict he cries to God, and the water wells up from the clefts of the rock for his refreshment.* In short, notwithstanding palpable and glaring defects, Samson's is a Divine vocation. To a people in a semi-heathenish condition, little raised above the paganism of the idolatrous tribes around them, he appears

* Judges xvi. 19.—Such is the accepted rendering of this passage.

as a witness for moral ideals, a preacher of immediate and complete separation from idolatry, and a guarantee of the prodigious power which accompanies the full consecration of men and nations, body, soul, and spirit, to the Eternal. He is a trumpet call, sounding through the land to awaken Israel from its Laodicean apathy, and gather them as a compact host against that Philistine tyranny, which not only stole their liberties, and hindered their progress, but threatened their national fragile existence. He is one of the forces keeping alive faith in the Lord God Almighty, in the stifling atmosphere of slavery, sensuality, and irreligion. Men could not despair in such a presence. They dare not abandon hope with such an invincible Leader. His character and fame fed the forces of a pinched and withering patriotism, and renewed the shrunken vitality of confidence in God. From these sources Hannah nourished her devotion as she dedicated her son Samuel to God in a Nazarite covenant. Saul and Jonathan found ardour in Samson's heroism, and David waxed more valiant in fight, and pursued the ancient foes with unrelaxed steadfastness, until his work culminated in a complete victory, and the establishment of a settled and prosperous government. Thus Samson's power is moral, of the will and spirit, and not merely of bone and sinew. He is not a giant in body and a dwarf in soul. The Spirit of God is the underlying force of his character, and alone secures for him his rank in the long line of mediators of Divine Truth, and agents of Divine Revelation.

II. Now what is attributed to God directly and at once in the Old Testament, is set down to the credit of Samson's

"faith" in the New; and accordingly this Divine Hero takes his place in the long roll-call of conquering believers, along with Abel and Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, Deborah and David. *The language changes, but the fact is the same.* It is the view-point that differs. The historian is seated on high, and reads Samson's career from beside the throne of the Eternal. The letter-writer is himself a struggling and hoping believer, in the very agony and throes of the conflict with persecution, and he looks at the life of the Hebrew "Warrior" through the dust and smoke of the field of battle. The key-note is the same; both are struck in the high spiritual realm, but the note has different names in the different *notations* of the Old and New economies. In that, it is the Spirit of God moving Samson to perform great exploits; in this, it is Samson moving himself by believing, *i.e.*, through *living* and acting *by* the power of God. God is all and in all in both representations, but in the later statement we see the chief organ through which the everlasting strength of Jehovah comes into and energises the soul. In the former case, the answer to the question of this morning reads, "Samson is of God, and has overcome them; because, greater is He that is in him, than he that is in the world;" whilst the second case is expressed in the language of the same writer: "This is the victory that overcometh the world; even our faith."

But this is not all. The new description is itself a positive addition to our knowledge, another ray from the Sun of Revelation. The same people do not describe the same facts in different ways without a motive. Fresh forces of the Spirit are at work meeting the fresh needs of living and suffering men, in a fresh and living speech.

addressed to the heart and life. "True eloquence," says one of our most recent seers, "is to translate a truth into language perfectly intelligible to the person to whom you speak." That is what the writer of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* does. In a sustained stream of the purest and most exalted eloquence, he translates the histories of Enoch and Noah, Moses and Samson, into the language of the Church and the street, brings them into vital touch with the feelings throbbing in the heart, and makes the Hebrew Christians to realize the unity of their lives, under the new and revolutionary conditions created by Christianity, with those of the fathers of the human race, the founders of the Hebrew nationality, and the prophets and leaders of the Revelation of God. In becoming Christians they were not destroying the law and the prophets, but filling out their programme, advancing their ideals, and accomplishing their projects. Samson, therefore, is not ousted from his place as a Teacher and Witness because a new dispensation has come, but fresh depths of meaning are disclosed in his individual ministry, whilst his tremendous labours are traced to the same spring as the heroic self-sacrifice of Abraham, the bright hopefulness of Joseph, and the grand venturesomeness of Moses, the man of God. His pulpit is still occupied, and his message is still heard; heard, not as an echo merely, but resonant with all the ringing energy and convincing reality of life. So the second answer illumines the first, and makes it more available for the wants of right-doing men.

Friends, one of our chief difficulties as Bible-readers and Christian workers in these days is to recognize this feature of Revelation and to obey the law it makes known. Too

many of us, Parents, Sunday-school teachers, and expositors of the Word, prefer lazily using Biblical phraseology instead of analysing Biblical fact and principle; faithfully translating them into language easily apprehended by the child or man to whom we speak, and then, according to the pattern put before us in the New Testament treatment of the facts of the Old, giving them such a practical setting amid the actualities of human life as shall convert them forthwith into nourishing food and inspiring power. "With words we rule men" said one who built for the year and the day; and so we may rule them for the year and the day; but not for eternity. Never! Ideas are the true kings. Principles govern. Truth is Lord of all. And we often need to lose our word to find our idea, to fling aside our phrase to make sure of our working principle, to strip off the garment of speech so that we may dwell in the presence of Truth. John Foster traced the aversion of men of taste to Evangelical Religion to the obsolete language used in the pulpit. Would that were the worst evil resulting from the presence of a "dead tongue" in our worship, and work; but it is not. Nine-tenths of the differences of Christians, and half of those of theologians, are not differences as to facts and principles but concerning terms and phrases, and would at once disappear in the presence of a thoroughly revised version of theological language done up to date and in the freshest English of the time. One strong reason why the Gospel of Christ still remains unappropriated by hearts that need it sorely is, that it has never been uttered in the speech they understand and with the sympathetic emotion that carries conviction. Children and young people too often leave our

schools, not with the idea that Christianity is something to live and work by ; to make them good mechanics, trustworthy servants, and patriotic citizens, but something set apart for special occasions, and chiefly useable in the critical emergencies of life ; a result mainly due to the fact that the Gospel has not been brought into living and formative relation to their habits of thinking and willing, of speech and deed. They have not heard it in "the language in which they were born." Now, Science is always recasting its speech Each century it creates a new vocabulary ; aye, each half-century, or less, it builds up a new dictionary. The old and eternal facts are investigated, but new processes of *interpretation* are discovered, and better methods of exposition spring up. Words, like men, are born, live, grow, and die. We can only discharge our obligations to our age as we catch the spirit of the writers of the New Testament, make the use of the elder Christianity they made of Mosaism and Judaism, adopt a language that beats and throbs with the life of to-day, and so reveal the unity of human life, and of all ages in the living and loving God.

III. Bringing Samson, then, from his far-off Zorah-home, and setting him in our London streets, taking him out of the ancient Eastern world, and looking at him in the full blaze of all the lights that shine on human character in its making, and on human struggle in its success and failure, what is the answer yielded to the demand—"Tell me where thy great strength lieth ?"

(1) No despicable advantage, surely, was that with which our hero started life. His being was stored with

force at his birth. He had an uncommon, I may say, for that day, a uniquely opulent inheritance.

"Not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory did he come
From God, who is our Home."

He was "born of a good family," though in a bad time—an unspeakably bad time; a family that dwelt at the topmost heights of spiritual consecration, had grandly dared in the midst of seething vice and irreligion to choose the most self-suppressing type of personal and domestic life, and dedicate its energies to obeying the most strenuous law of living yet made known, even that of the Nazarite Vow. No aspiration soared higher. No range of service was broader. No attitude was less open to question. No position made greater demands on courage, fidelity, and self-sacrifice. Voluntarily, they cut themselves off from numerous pleasures, persistently protested against the evils and perils of the age, totally abstained from wine and other intoxicants, and braced themselves to meet the severest challenges of duty by the public avowal of their manner of life. Born into that elect home, inheriting the spiritual aptitudes of his saintly mother, charged with the subtle and inexplicable energies that belong to a devout and consecrated family stock, Samson is forthwith dedicated to God, "offered as an offering" to Him, to be His, His wholly and always, His to begin betimes the gigantic task of delivering Israel from the cruel hand of the Philistine.

See the bright-eyed, strong-limbed, reflective youth, as running his fingers through his long flowing locks—the sign of his separation for God and his errand in the

world—he ponders the ever-recurring problem of his boyhood!

"Mother," he exclaims, "tell me why the scissors never touch my hair, as they do that of my companions? Why may I not eat and drink as they do?"

"Because you, my darling boy, are not like other lads. You belong to God, as other children do not. You have a work to do for your country, of which God told me before you were born, and this long hair is the sign and mark of your high calling. Never, on any account, is one curl of that hair to be cut. Never should you forget that the God of Abraham, and Moses, and Gideon, has a great work for you to do."

Can you estimate the spiritual wealth of such a descent? Have you any measure for the advantages of such a home? Would not every day be an acquisition of power, and may we not readily believe, that as "the child grew the Lord blessed him?"

Parentage and nurture are amongst the chief agents for continuing and advancing the spiritual welfare of the world; and so, whilst God was the fountain-head of all the power of Samson, one stream of the spirit-force assuredly came along the line of inherited sanctities and family training, constituting him the typical Nazarite, the chief example of that special phase of the Hebrew religion—at once of its splendid strength and of its possible weakness.

The growth and evolution of goodness from age to age is undeniable. God lives through all the centuries, and His spiritual life and energy are fixed incorporate in our humanity and pass on with increasing and reproductive

power from generation to generation. The human race is, therefore, getting richer and richer. The simple child of to-day is at once the man of all the ages, and the inheritor of moral and intellectual aptitudes which it has taken vast eras to produce. We have long taught the doctrine of inherited "depravity," and taught it till many men have come to say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Still, we must insist on the hereditary character of evil bias. It is fact, terrible fact. Crowds of children "come trailing clouds," not of "glory," but of dishonour and shame, of weakness and suffering. But we cannot look into Samson's home without learning that we must also teach the other side of this great law. Merit does not and cannot pass from man to man. Goodness is active, and of the will and spirit; but that men are born with potentialities for goodness as well as for evil, the history of the race, and especially of the Hebrew, and Christian stocks, abundantly demonstrates. "Though Nature appears capricious, some qualities she carefully fixes and transmits, but some, and those the finer, she exhales with the breath of the individual, as too costly to perpetuate. But I notice also that they may become fixed and permanent in any stock by painting and repainting them on every individual, until at last Nature adopts them and bakes them in her porcelain."* Isaac and Joseph, Samson and Samuel, in the Jewish Church; Timothy and Augustine, Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen, amongst the earlier Christians; Luther and John and Charles Wesley and thousands more in recent times, are examples that should

* Quoted in life of R. W. Emerson, by O. W. Holmes, page 2.

stimulate many of us to give thanks to God for the blessings of power and grace He has bestowed upon us through parents passed into the skies !

Like Samson, General Gordon, the hero whose splendid bravery and simple religion fill our hearts to-day, owed a large debt to his parentage and early education. He was born of a soldier-race. For a century and a half his ancestors have followed the military profession. His father was generous and genial, and well-fitted to rule. His mother was a soldiers' faithful nurse in the Crimea. All his associations urged him to the soldier's career, and prepared him for the brilliant and unforgetable service he has rendered not to England only, but to the world. And God, our God, the God who nourished Garfield in the Christian home of the far West, and Gordon at Woolwich, is now growing in the godly homes of England and Scotland, the lads who will be our future leaders, and teachers, and saviours, the Samsons who will fight and beat down evil under their feet. Let us hold fast our faith in Him, and so live and act, that our influence shall be pure, holy, and beneficial twenty generations hence.

(2) Again, Samson's Nazarism, practised from boyhood nourished by a mother's watchful care, and intensified by his isolation from the rest of the world, must have exercised an incalculable power upon his mind, and fixed in the "porcelain" of his nature the faith that he had a supreme work to do for God, and was responsible to Him, till the last stroke was given. The keen sense of life-long separation and isolation for the sake of national service, must have immensely quickened his feeling of obligation. It is a true instinct, which, with or without a vow, departs

from a dissipating and enfeebling atmosphere, to feed conviction and increase strength. Hence it has entered in different measures into every strong and victorious life. It was the spring of Abraham's call out of heathenism ; it governed the location of the Hebrew people in the restricted area of Palestine, and it lies at the basis of the Christian Society. Souls in solitude fill with God. Men with a vast vocation lay hold on the secrets of strength in periods of "aloofness" from the world. Moses spends forty years in Sinai's desert, Paul dwells for three years in the deserts of Arabia, and Christ our Master, Himself goes apart with His disciples into a desert place to rest awhile. Never was the practice of isolation for the sake of efficiency more abundant than now. It is at its maximum ; in the artist who denies himself for beauty, in the scientist who restricts his toils to a solitary class of insects for the sake of fuller knowledge, and in the writer, who refuses to study everything for the sake of mastering some one thing. The man who means to do any real work in a brief life must know what *not* to do. Samson's vow was of signal service in teaching that. The root of his religion was separation, and his vow roused and stimulated his nature, opened his being to the access of God's Spirit with unresisted fulness and all-subduing might, developed the feeling of the sacred inviolability of his life, assured him he could not be hurt so long as he was faithful to his calling, and rendered him susceptible of that strength of will, heroic fearlessness, and resistless dash, which made him indomitable. Samson is a dedicated will ; and once dedicated in will to God we are strong for God and by God. God *can* use us to the uttermost against all evil. There is nothing to resist His Omnipotence. His strength flows freely

through us, and the feeblest is as David and David as God.

Taken prisoner by the Abyssinians, Gordon was addressed by King John with the question, "Do you know, Gordon Pasha, that I could kill you on the spot if I liked?" "I am perfectly well aware of it, your Majesty. Do so at once if it is your royal pleasure. I am ready." This disconcerted the King, and he exclaimed, "What, ready to be killed!" "Certainly," replied Gordon, "I am always ready to die; and so far from fearing your putting me to death, you would confer a favour on me by doing so; for you would be doing for me that which I am precluded by my religious scruples from doing for myself, you would relieve me of all the troubles and misfortunes which the future may have in store for me." Gordon endured as seeing Him Who is invisible, felt that his life was in God's hands, and that he was immortal till his work was done. This conviction was the source of his strength, the fountain of his fearless courage, the secret of his irresistible power. Like Samson, he knew and felt that the vows of the Lord were upon him; and the knowledge was victorious power.

(3) The reputation of Samson has suffered from the grim humour marking some of his exploits and the gigantic and boisterous mirth that runs riot through some of his achievements. We men of the West set so high an estimate on strenuous earnestness, rigid intensity, and serious ardour, that we always prefer majesty to grace, sober sincerity to playful humour. The massive dignity and royal gravity of Milton win upon us, whilst the nimble pliancy and occasional sportfulness of Shakespeare are ignored. We are attracted by the solemn grandeur of the colossal

Moses, and repelled by the ponderous jollity and rollicking riddles of Samson. But we must not forget that great natures are rarely wanting in humour. Carlyle says, "Humour has been justly regarded as the finest perfection of poetic genius. He who wants it, be his other gifts what they may, has only half a mind; an eye for what is above him, not for what is about him or below him. The man of humour sees common life, even mean life, under the new light of sportfulness and love; whatever has existence has a charm for him."* Another witness says, "The best work done in this world is joyous work; and joyous work must command a man's whole being, free from the friction of misplaced powers and the gasping of stifled tastes." Samson's natural cheerfulness; his light and cheerful temperament, sending forth a full buoyant river of mirth, was one of the sources of his strength; saving him from the weakness that, in a time of oppression and calamity, nurses care, frets away power, anticipates disaster, and wastes existence. Never quailing before the superiority of his foes, he is as sunny as he is strong, as bright as he is bold, and thus is able to husband his strength for the heaviest demand that the day may bring. Joy is a duty, and of priceless worth is the temperament that makes obedience easy, opening the soul to every genial ray that shines, and closing it to the access of brooding care and darkening anxiety. Men, pessimistic by nature, are never conquerors. The glad are the strong. Light-hearted, humourous, and philantbropic Gordon takes the large gold

*Miscellanies. Essay on Schiller, p. 97. *Cf.* also the Essay on Richter, pp. 12, 13. Carlyle's description of Richter would, in not a few points, exactly portray the qualities of the Hebrew hero.

medal given him by the Chinese Empress at the close of the rebellion, and erasing the inscription, forwards it to relieve the starving operatives in the Lancashire cotton famine. It is the act of one who is careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, makes known his requests to God.

(4) The initial point in the Hebrew story of Samson is the ominous preface, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years." It was a fearful punishment for their disobedience and faithlessness. The Philistines were the worst foes Israel had seen. Their military organization was compact and strong, their discipline severe, and their position gave them the control of the passes to the mountain home of the Hebrews. From their five cities they marched forth as a conquering phalanx, harassed and oppressed the Israelites, stole their harvests, checked their agriculture by refusing them the opportunity to sharpen and make tools, and enslaved their men, women, and children. It was one of the darkest hours in Israel's history. The tribes generally had lost heart and hope, and Judah was so disorganised, that instead of co-operating with Samson, they betrayed him into the hands of the common enemy. Here then was urgent need, and the need provoked and stimulated Samson's faith, as his vow had inspired it. Necessity was laid upon him. The Spirit of God moved him mightily by the sight of the work to be done, the wide-spread anarchy and confusion, and the vast suffering and misery. Consecrated souls are goaded to battle by the sympathetic pains they feel with the wronged and the oppressed. Gordon cannot rest as a quiet

plodding secretary while there is disorder to be quelled, misrule to be put down, and slavery to be abolished. He must go forth to the fight. Woe to him if he lift not his arm as the friend of the needy, and the deliverer of the oppressed. Oh, for the quick sympathy that sees in every lost soul a call to service; and in every national and social evil a Divine summons to a quenchless zeal in service for God and men!

(5) But the function of Samson in Revelation would be most imperfectly discharged for us, if we did not recognise the teaching of his flagrant and ignominious fall. Nothing external, though it be the purest and best, can enable us "to keep the heights the soul is competent to gain." God, and God alone, is sufficient for continuous progress, and final victory. Not inherited forces, be they the strongest; not vows of consecration, institutions, books, and charities; not the sunniest temperament; not the crying needs of men—for the powerful irritant in our lot may give place to a seductive Delilah; temperament may be clouded by disease, percolated by mischief; the vow may lose its spell, or Total Abstinence from wine become a snare, alluring us to trust it for safety instead of the living God, and our continuous spiritual activity. God, and God alone, can maintain the distinctive splendour of Samson's career, and if he drives Him away, not only the Philistines of earth, but the devils of hell, are let loose upon him. That Samson did. He *violated* everything signified by his Nazarite condition. The body that was prepared for him, he debased by gross sensuality. The call of God to separation from heathenism he disobeyed, and fraternized

with the paganism he should have destroyed. He fouled the pure streams of joy, and suspended the battle against God's foes. God's Spirit departed from him, and his shorn locks lying there in Delilah's lap were the horrible symbol of his horrible fall.

"O! impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength, without a double share
Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldly, burdensome;
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command!"

Thus the *third* answer illumines and enforces the *first* and *second;* takes us at once to the Spirit of God, the Source of all spiritual strength, and emphasises the absolute necessity of a constant and growing "faith" in God, in order that we may wisely use the powers we inherit, the institutions in the midst of which we live, and the temperament we possess; and may have such understanding of our times, as to read our duty in the manifold needs of men, and effectively resist the temptations which so easily beset us. We must dwell in God and God in us if our strength is to be *used* according to our day.

These three answers are one, and all take us to God our Father in humble trustfulness and yearning desire. Then laying aside every weight, running the race of patience that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, let us be faithful to the high vocation wherewith we are called.

Some years since I walked the recently disinterred streets of Pompeii, and heard the thrilling story of its fresh exposure to the light of heaven, after centuries of burial

beneath the lava of Vesuvius. Some of the dwellers in that city were found exactly in the spot in which they were overtaken by the burning scoriæ and ashes. Some had rushed into deep vaults for safety, others had ascended the highest chambers; but one, a Roman sentinel, stood at the gate of the city, his hand grasping his sword, and his attitude that of a trusty watchman. He did not stir from his post. We are sure that, though our Hebrew Samson kept not his first estate, but fell from his steadfastness with a great and ignominious fall, our latest and greatest national hero—the British Samson—stood firm and inflexible to the end; never surrendering his simple trust in God, but enduring to the last breath as a conquering soldier, a large-hearted philanthropist, a faithful and true Christian. Thus from Khartoum is preached this day the glad tidings that God is the Strength and Joy of all who trust Him.

May the Lord so move us by His Spirit, and fill our hearts with faith, that we may be true to our call, and faithful even unto death!

"A KIND overflow of kindness; there are no faces truer than those that are so washed. How much better it is to weep at joy than to joy at weeping."

SHAKESPEARE.

"Every man in love, shows better than he is, though, thank God, not better than he is meant to become."

G. MACDONALD.

"Every family is a history in itself, and even a poem to those who know how to search its pages."

LAMARTINE.

"All that we understand by the name of Home—its perfect trust and truth, its simple holiness, its exquisite happiness—being to the world what conscience is to the human mind."

BULWER LYTTON.

A Hebrew Love-Story.

I can easily imagine the feelings of surprise with which an earnest and reflective student of the Revelation of God meets for the first time with the captivating and pathetic love-story of the young and graceful widow, contained in the Book of Ruth. It grates upon his deep reverence for the majesty and dignity of Truth, and disturbs his profound awe for the Eternal Revealer, to see the love-tale of an insignificant and alien Moabitess on the same shelves of the Divine Library with the lofty and moving elegy of Jeremiah's *Lamentations*, the sweet and soul-stirring lyrics of the *Psalter* of David and Asaph ; the sublime eloquence and splendid imagery of *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel*, the grand and incomparable epic of *Job*, and the eternally reproductive sayings of the Son of Man. Not all at once was his

strenuous spirit reconciled to the giant humour of Samson, the scorn-filled sarcasms flung in taunting peals at the worshippers of Baal, the grave errors of David, the keen satire and fixed despair of *Ecclesiastes*, and to the commercial shrewdness and business sharpness with which the Book of *Proverbs* makes the best of both worlds; but the love-colloquies of the *Canticles* and the narrative of the courtship of Boaz and Ruth, remain, in his judgment, to the last, far below the high range of sublimity and grandeur befitting a Revelation of God to the sons of men.

Further thought on the meaning and character of Revelation; on its wide compass, embracing all that is human as well as all that is Divine; its errorless purpose, the transformation of all life by making it one with God; will abate your astonishment, change your hesitating study into a genial welcome, and prepare you not only to admire the *form* of this pure Hebrew idyll, but also to recognize its undoubted right to the place it holds in the whole counsel of God. No theme is so essentially noble that it may not be rendered ignoble by a hard and narrow spirit; and nothing in our human life is so insignificant that it may not be lifted into the light and glory of heaven by a soul that breathes a true purpose and a passionate love to serve God and men. Nobility is not of the *theme* but of the *spirit* in which it is handled. The breaking of an alabaster box of ointment is a trivial occurrence; but the bright motive burning in the heart of Mary gives it a dignity and beauty for evermore. So the sorrow of Naomi over her irreclaimable dead and the meeting and intertwining of the deeply-furrowed soul of Ruth with the large rich nature of the Bethlehem farmer

are commonplace events in a world where deaths and marriages never leave us; but they are so touched and glorified by Inspiration, that the form in which they appear exhibits the finest wedding of truth and beauty, and reveals also some of the manifold ways in which the Lord Jehovah gives *Daily Strength for Daily Living.*

THE LOVE-STORY

gives us a glimpse of every-day life in Bethlehem—in home and in harvest-field, in its general gossip and its lawsuits, more than three thousand years ago. It is one picture painted in four panels; each conceived with a simplicity and naturalness, fidelity to life and fact, that defy all description, and executed with a gentleness of touch and softness of tone unequalled. We must look with the eyes of sympathy, quickened by experience of life, and we shall see more than any interpreter can ever tell us, and feel more than we can ever tell.

The story is told in four brief chapters.

CHAPTER I.—DARK DAYS.

"Now it came to pass when the Judges judged, that famine was in the land," and Elimelech, the head of a small family dwelling at Bethlehem-judah, the husband of Naomi, and father of Mahlon and Chilion, felt a deep restlessness begotten of "hard times" and a pinched fortune. He was, as we should say, "a man of means," but the shortness of bread in the land filled him with disquiet for himself and his wife, and for the future of his upgrown sons. Like Lot, in view "of all the plain of Jordan," and in a similar spirit, he beheld

the richly watered uplands of Moab, dreamt dreams of plenty, and forthwith went to sojourn in that fertile field, undeterred by the notorious risks of exposing those who were dear to him to the grave perils of the social life and sensuous religion of the Moabites.

But you do not escape all trouble by leaving your country. Sorrow is everywhere. Emigration is not deliverance from anxiety, and difficulty, and death. Elimelech soon dies, and Naomi is a widow, charged along with two sons, with all the responsibilities of home in a strange land. Mahlon and Chilion take to themselves wives of the daughters of Moab ; but they too, soon follow their father to the grave, and Naomi is left, herself a widow, and by her side, her two daughters-in-law, both widows as well.

It is a dark and cloudy day, and Naomi is driven to her refuge in God ; for somehow we always feel that, mysterious as is our life, there is light in Him, and, however sad our fate, He is a real and present help ; that, therefore, no day is absolutely hopeless, and no lot, however adverse, is beyond His care. The afflicted heart says, "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. He is a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless." Hence good news comes to the bruised and aching heart of Naomi, for the Lord hath visited His people in giving them bread. At once she goes out of the place where she was with her daughters-in-law ; and together they start on their way to return to the land of Judah. But though the mother's heart clings to Orpah and Ruth, she feels she cannot take them away from their own people and from their own gods, to a strange land and a strange religion ; and she says,

"Go, return each to her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me." Then she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. They said they could not leave her. Further persuasions prevailed on Orpah, and she went back to her people and her gods; but Ruth clave unto her, saying, with strong and passionate devotion, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, where thou diest I will die and there will I be buried, the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me." When Naomi saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Bethlehem.

Oh, the sweet rest of that clinging attachment. More satisfying than all human wisdom, more solacing than all earthly wealth, more inspiring than all human speech, is one draught of a simple human love that will not forsake us.

Chapter II.—Gleams of Sunshine.

And it came to pass when they walked along the single street, which runs along the double crest of the white chalk ridge on which Bethlehem rests, that all the city was moved, and with an eloquence, the more stirring for its brevity, the citizens exclaimed, with eyes full of meaning, as they glanced at one another, "This! Naomi!" They recalled what she was ten or twelve years ago, noted the marks graven in her features by the successive blows of misfortune, and they

were appalled. Naomi feeling, as we do sometimes, the bitter satire that life writes underneath our names, says, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, for the Lord hath greatly afflicted me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty"; and with a spasm of despair and bitterness, her heart almost breaking under its load, she added, why then, call ye me Naomi, seeing "the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me!"

Fortunately for us, sorrow brings us no release from work, and the necessities of living become sources of benediction to the surcharged hearts of the afflicted. The lamentations of the Bethlehemites do not bring bread, and their sympathy does not create and sustain a home. Therefore, Ruth must work, and it being the time of barley-harvest, she goes agleaning: and her "hap" was, under that "Providence that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will," to light on the field of Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Now Boaz was a man of wealth, and what is better, he knew how to use it; a mighty man, a man of valorous heart and noble deed; with a straight-forward child-like faith in Heaven's will and Heaven's help; a gentle and true knight, with a strong sense of justice, and an overflowing sympathy; a model-master, courteous towards the men and maidens he employs, and quick to recognize the richer graces of the spirit through manifold disguises. Coming into his barley-field, Boaz espies the strange damsel gleaning ears of corn after his reaping-men, and interested in her appearance, enquires of his overseer who she is. Scarcely has he learnt the story of her brief and chequered life, the early death of her young husband, her self-

expatriation, her unselfish devotion to Naomi, than the invisible gossamer-web of love begins to weave, and he, doubtless with some tremors of heart, bids his reapers give Ruth a cordial welcome to the field, treat her with special kindness, pull out some ears from the shocks on purpose for her, whilst he, himself, hands to her a portion of their meal of parched corn.

But love is not content with gifts. Boaz speaks words that tell of genuine sympathy, of pity melting into affection and prayer. He sees her sorrow and steadfastness, her fidelity and her exile, and breaking out into the language of benediction, he breathes the prayer whose answer is at hand, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." And Ruth, chastened by her sorrow, and made quickly responsive to the movements of sympathy, overflows with gratitude to her benefactor, and gives herself with a gladdened heart to her work, to the end of the barley and wheat harvest.

Oh! what solacing visions and indefinable joys are given by God for the healing of our broken hearts! What mysterious and unexpected aids He sends for the completion of our fragmentary lives!

Chapter III.—Pressing the Claim.

That was a happy moment when Ruth, going home to her mother-in-law laden with barley, was met with the question, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" Swiftly she told all, and as swiftly Naomi saw in it the hand of God, and said, "Blessed be he of the Lord, Who hath not left off His kindness," as I had sinfully thought, "to the living

and to the dead,"—and to the "dead" she adds; for her faithful heart had not forgotten Elimelech left in the land of Moab, and her own undying love told her of a still more enduring love in God, and enabled her to read its signs in her daughter's prosperity. For this kindness was the dismissal of all her fears concerning the future of her daughter-in-law. Now she felt that Boaz might not after all be averse to obedience to the law of Moses, but ready to act the part of a goël, or redeemer to Ruth; although she was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise. His heart might overleap the letter, and seizing its spirit, the dead husband's inheritance be re-purchased, and his childless widow find an "asylum" through marriage. Naomi will see. Skilfully she arranges her plans, and by a series of acts, in the highest degree censurable, if judged by our laws and customs, Ruth secures an opportunity of stating her case and pressing her suit. It is enough. The heart of Boaz was already won and only waited a favourable moment like this. Ruth's notable purity and high character were her defence and her victory. "I will," said Boaz, "carry out the law. All the city of my people doth know thou art a brave and virtuous woman, and truly indeed I am thy goël. But there is one difficulty! A prior right exists in another, and his claim must be disposed of, according to the law of Moses." Then giving six measures of barley into her shawl, he sends her to her mother-in-law, and prepares himself for his law-suit.

The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us. Eyes must be open, fingers nimble, and spirit alert, or the river will be gone, and we shall be left poor indeed. We are saved by an active hope.

Chapter IV.—A Law-Suit and a Wedding.

Naomi was right. Boaz did not rest until he had finished the matter. Early he went to the gate of the city, the "Temple Bar" of Bethlehem, the place for holding the "Local Council," by which all matters pertaining to inheritance and marriage were determined. One Elder of the city passes and receives the legal summons to take his place as a judge and witness; and another and another, until the *ten* required by the statute are gathered together.* The unnamed kinsman of Elimelech, who stands first in obligation to act as goël is cited and appears. Boaz recites the facts, and concludes his "case" by saying to the kinsman concerning Elimelech's parcel of land—"Buy it before the inhabitants and elders of the people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it, but, if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me that I may know, for there is none to redeem it but thou and I, and I am next to thee." And he said, "I will redeem it." Then said Boaz, "you must also buy it of Ruth the Moabitess, and marry her according to the law of inheritance." The anonymous kinsman, not prepared for such a contingency, states his difficulty to the elders, and then "draws off his shoe" in token that he passes his rights in Elimelech's land over to the next heir, Boaz. Boaz has thus got the desire of his heart, and immediately takes the alien, who has come to trust under the shadow of Jehovah's wings, as his wife, amid the blessings and congratulations of his rejoicing neighbours.

"What greater thing is there for two human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life—to strengthen each

Cf. Deut. xxv. 5-10.

other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?"*

I. Glancing back over the lines of this sweet and pure pastoral idyll, I feel that, rarely did human story more impressively demonstrate the unspeakable worth of lowly folk, the fine and favourable issues of seemingly suppressed lives, the hidden wealth of true and unobtrusive souls, for nations and for the race. Naomi and Ruth may have been tempted to bemoan again and again in the spirit of Pope, in his "Ode on Solitude,"

"Thus let me live unseen, unknown,
Thus unlamented let me die,
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie."

They were fated to move in the narrowest spheres, and to play an inconspicuous part, crushed and broken by tragic sorrows, and pushed almost out of sight by crowding cares, and yet they reveal a heroism of patience, a beauty of character, a purity and fervour of love, and an intensity of religious consecration, which secures for them an untold joy, and for the world exhaustless fountains of inspiration.

I know it is stated by a hard and cramped literalism that this Scripture is written for the sake of the ten lines copied from a Hebrew register with which it concludes, and from which we know that Ruth the Gentile became, by her marriage with Boaz, an ancestress of our Lord along with Tamar, Rahab, and Mary. The presence of

* George Eliot in *Adam Bede*.

such links in the chain of the Saviour's ancestry is as fruitful as it is welcome; but I can scarcely think Christ Himself would count the chief charm of this story the fact that it supplies material for the construction of a genealogical tree. Recall one scene in His life. He is in the full swing of a fierce conflict with the priestly party at Jerusalem, and is denouncing their hardness of heart, and baseness of motives, with such unsparing energy that His relatives take alarm, say He is beside Himself, and plot to detach Him from His enemies and keep Him out of harm's way. The message is sent to Him that His mother and brothers and sisters are outside the crowd waiting to speak with Him—"Looking all round about Him," as Mark says, and bringing every face into view, He lifts up His hand and pointing to His disciples, says, "Behold my mother and my brethren"; and then to show that no solitary spirit is forgotten, He utters the supreme law of kinship, "*Whosoever will do the will of God*, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The simplest and most commonplace lives are raised to the noblest relationships by a fixed will to do the painful right, a resolute battle with the pleasant wrong, and a daily yearning of soul towards the living and loving God. Every man amongst us may get into the genealogical tree of the Saviour of men by faith and obedience.

We talk of a few great names as if they were the whole life of the world; identify the historic few with the nourishing but unnamed many, and like Elijah say there are no "saints" because there are no statistics. Half a score generals shut out of sight the fidelity and daring of the millions of the rank and file, without whom not a

battle could be fought, an enemy vanquished, or a victory won. Notoriety counts for nothing in the sum of things. The brook that babbles loudest does not nourish most. The world's future lay more in quiet Bethlehem, with Naomi and Ruth, than it did at the head-quarters of Judge Eli. Great and little are relative terms, and we need eternity to help us to define and apply them. The great of yesterday will be the little of to-morrow. The small and despised stone cut out of the mountains by unseen hands will yet fill the earth with its presence. Let us not despise ourselves. God does not; and our future is with Him. Every name is historic in His estimate. No prayer or alms is forgotten in the heavens; and the obscurest individual has his place in the Divine plan, his discipline and training in the Divine school, and will leave his influence in God's world. That twentieth century that is coming cannot dispense with one of us. We are necessary to it and to its successor. The man of the future—the man fashioned after the heart of Christ, filled with His self-sacrificing spirit, and doing His work is *here* now, struggling into existence, through our prayers and tears, bonds and battles, looking for and hastening towards the ideal; growing—with what "growing pains" God and he only know, but certainly growing up in all things to a perfect man according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

"Suppressed lives!" Nay, brother-man, why sayest thou, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the truest, helpfullest life ever lived on our globe was "suppressed" for nearly thirty years,

only once peering out of the obscurity of its artizan experiences? Have faith in God, and do His work where you are, and He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day. We are all strange folk if you look far enough. No man's pedigree will bear long examination. Short reckonings with our ancestry are necessary to our comfort. Let the waters of inquiry percolate deep down, and they will wash out not a little sand and mud, and produce a "slip" of our seeming greatness, painful to see. God comes through all sorts of people, makes the worst into the best, changes the sinner into the saint, rears David in the land of Moab, and calls His Son out of Egypt. Each one of us may, therefore, sing, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."

"No stream from its source
Flows seaward, how lonely soever its course,
But what some land is gladdened. No star ever rose
And set, without influence somewhere. Who knows
What earth needs from earth's lowest creature? No life
Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife,
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.
The spirits of just men made perfect on high,
The army of martyrs who stand by the throne
And gaze into the Face that makes glorious their own,
Know this, surely, at last. Honest love, honest sorrow,
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow,
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make
weary,
The heart they have saddened, the life they leave dreary?

Hush ! the seven-fold heavens to the voice of the Spirit
Echo : He that o'ercometh shall all things inherit." *

II. But we are not near enough to the heart of this story to hear its beat, and feel its warmth, until we see that it is a true and tender, pure and heroic woman's love that gives such grace to these Hebrew homes, and confers such peerless worth on these lowly lives. The spell of the Book of Ruth is Ruth herself, and the chief charm of Ruth is her unselfish and devoted *love*. The magnet is not in Elimelech ; indeed I am not sure that his was not a mean spirit seeking *first*, and even at the risk of the welfare of wife and bairns, "after those things which the Gentiles seek." Certainly it is not in the two sons ; we know too little of them to take much interest in them. Nor is it in Orpah, who, after a sharp struggle, goes back to her people and her gods. Boaz wins our affection at once, and lives in our fancy—a personality rich in fine courtesy and manly chivalry. We admire him ; but we cannot give him the first place in our hearts. Nor even do we accord this honour to the Hebrew Naomi. She is not the real heroine of the story, but must give place to the conquering affection of her self-sacrificing daughter-in-law. As Dr. Cox says, this "is not the story of a romantic love between a young man and young woman. It is the story of a woman's love for a woman : and strangely as it would sound in the ears of our modern wits, it is the story of a young wife's passionate and devoted love for her mother-in-law."† Ruth exhibits a love stronger and purer than that of

* Owen Meredith. † Expositor. First Series : II. 7.

Naomi, for she not only cleanses her heart of all prejudices, but abandons the land of her fathers, parts with the "gods" of her youth, accepts an exile life, confronts and conquers the scorn of race and inborn alienation of the women of Bethlehem, wholly because of the love that burns and glows on the altar of her heart towards the beloved husband of her youth, and his lonely and desolate mother Naomi!

Mighty is the force of wifehood and motherhood! mighty, magnetic, and mysterious the force of a true woman's love, on herself and on those about her, near and afar, to-day and for evermore! It transfigures the deadest humdrum into a circle of beautiful duty, redeems the most menial acts from meanness, and raises them to dignity; displaces selfishness by self-denial, fear by courage, anxiety by content, fretfulness by patience, peevishness by self-control, wrong by right, the sordid earth by the bright skies and radiant sunshine of the enduring heavens. Never shall we men know the unspeakable debt we owe to the Naomis and Ruths of our homes, the delicate-tendrilled plants that grow in our domestic gardens, filling them with flowers that sweeten the atmosphere, and with fruits that are for the healing of the nations. Never can we assess our obligations to the unknown mother and sister of the indestructible Moses; to the ancestresses of David, "the darling of Israel," and the inspired singer of the World; to Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy, the son of Paul; to Cornelia, the self-denying character-building mother of the Gracchi; and to hosts of good and holy women, who, by the faithful doing of simple duties, the patient bearing of great burdens, the cherishing of high and pure aims, and the breathing of a

nobly unselfish spirit, have sweetened and purified and advanced the life of the world. God's chief gifts of power and help, next to the Gospel, have been made through woman's love; and the Gospel, instead of being an exception, is the highest illustration of the universal fact, "for when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a *woman*."

Brothers and sons give an unstinted reverence to the "Queens of your homes!" Remember "affection is the broadest basis of goodness in life," and do not be afraid of a hearty affection, and an earnest and self-sacrificing love. "To love," said Burke, "the little platoon we belong to in society is the germ of all public affections." This is England's real wealth; not the immense breadth of its possessions, not its victories over distant foes, not the massive fortunes of its children, not even its growing intelligence, but its pure homes, its sweet and noble lives, its men of simple faith and heroic mould, its women of sterling goodness, sweet modesty, winning grace, and self-suppressing love. In this, as Kingsley declared, "Any man or woman who will, in any age and under any circumstances, can live the heroic life and exercise heroic influences." Lothario crossed the Atlantic expecting to find in the New World, facilities for the execution of his projects he could not discover in Germany. He failed, and he wrote home, saying, "I will return, and in my own house, upon my own property, among my own people, I will say, '*here or nowhere is America.*'" If we fail at home, we are lost altogether!

III. *Life and love lead to God.* For life is God's gift and love is of God's nature. "We love, because He *first*

loved us." This is true of the love in the Home as much as of the love of the Church. All pure and unselfish love comes from God and leads to God. A great and worthy affection is so closely akin to religious feeling, that it is hardly distinguishable from it. The spheres of *life* are not separated by hard and fast lines. Minerals are sharp and crystalline in outline, but the human body is not, and the life of the intellect shades into that of the heart, by imperceptible gradations; so it is with the love of the human and of the divine. The one conducts and passes over into the other so frequently, that notably one of the chief ways in which God blesses and saves men, is by the sweet influences of personal love. Blessed beyond expression is the power of one true loving soul like Naomi's on another like Ruth's. It soothes her sorrowing spirit, charms her out of her idolatries, clothes the ideas of Moses in an attractive garb, makes them a real gospel, leading the sorrowing Moabitess to trust in the wings of Jehovah. *The love of God is shed abroad in her heart by the spirit of kindly interest and motherly solicitude of Naomi.*

Thus the story of Ruth is a fragment in a "missionary report." It tells of the conversion of a Gentile, and illustrates the wisest way of "winning souls." God saves the world by love, and we can't succeed by departing from His method and ignoring His Spirit. Live in the love of God and you not only bear your own sorrows with serenity but you soften the hard and pitiless, rebuke the harsh and intolerant, goad the indolent, soothe the sad and desolate and bereaved, give companionship to the lonely, and cast out the Gentile spirit from the world. The glance of a sincere and loving soul will do more to dissipate prejudice, to abolish alienation.

to cleanse the mind of falsehood, kindle trust and charity, than the most elaborate arguments, or the most eloquent appeals. Naomi is a typical home missionary, and Ruth is the pattern and prophecy of the success that crowns wise and loving labour.

Naomi and Ruth and Boaz are still with us, and their work goes on, blessing and enriching the world. Men may paint dark pictures of our social and political condition, and tell us we are in deep waters—and God knows we have troubles enough!—but it is not all trouble, nor is the sky unbroken! Forget not, all this moral beauty and religious fervour grew in Bethlehem in one of the gloomiest eras of Israel's history: after more than three hundred years of confusion, disorder, and moral decay, broken only by a spasmodic attempt here and there at something better. It was a bright flower growing in a dark bog—a rift in the clouds to let the light through. Genuine God-fed religion maintains itself in the private tranquillity of the home; it does not despair because of "votes of censure," the conflicts of "ins and outs," the noise of a blatant press, the frenzies of a fickle populace, or the forecasts of dismal prophets; but loves and suffers, prays and worships, enjoys and works, assured that the righteous God rules amongst men, and is a sure refuge for all those that put their trust in Him.

If then we go to the Psalms of David when we pray and sing; if we find in *Isaiah* principles to guide our statesmanship at home and our policy abroad; if the Book of *Job* aids us in solving the problem of the presence of evil in a world administered in love; if from the *Judges, and Kings, and Chronicles*, we learn the laws which underlie

the building of nations; if the *Proverbs* condense wisdom into portable phrases we can take to business; if we go to the Gospels and Epistles to know Christ as our wisdom and sanctification, righteousness and redemption, then we ought to keep *Ruth* within hand-reach in every part of our homes, as a book that reveals the Divine in the home, and the human in God, as much, if not more, than any other book of the Old Testament; a book that says, in sorrow, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, and in acts of mercy to the needy of your own household"; a book that whispers the deep secret of human blessedness, even a true, sustained, and inspired, self-sacrificing love; a book that repeats to hearts blighted by bereavement and oppressed with care, the domestic evangel, God will do all things well, if only we are brave and trustful in Him.

"HUSHED was the evening hymn,
The temple courts were dark,
The lamp was burning dim
Before the sacred ark!
When suddenly a voice Divine
Rang through the silence of the shrine.

"The old man, meek and mild,
The priest of Israel, slept;
His watch the temple-child,
The little Levite, kept;
And what from Eli's sense was sealed,
The Lord to Hannah's son revealed.

"O! give me Samuel's ear,
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word:
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all."

J. D. BURNS.

Present Day Inspiration.

"And the Lord came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth."

—1 *Samuel* iii. 10.

Does God speak to our children to-day as He did to this lad Samuel? Do messages and forces that clear the day's work, chasten the spirit, gladden the heart, impart invincible energy and stimulate the larger life of the world, reach us now, as they did the dedicated soul of this son of Hannah three thousand years ago? Is it given to us to see the truth without intervening veil, to feel its glowing and irrepressible heat, and to utter it with persuasive and cleansing eloquence, or are God's prophets all dead, even to the last man, and the whole succession ended for ever and ever?

I do not ask does God speak to us in an *audible* voice, and in dictionary English, freed from all the possible obscurities that cling like a glutinous coat to our every-day speech. For you know well enough that the *form* is not, and never can be, of the *essence* of a message. Methods

are details. Spiritual impulse and enlightenment, life and power, are all in all, the Alpha and Omega of Inspiration. By telephone or telegraph, by written letter or printed page; by lucid speech or the sympathetic contact of a visible but voiceless human presence; by the magnetic and mysterious transfusion from a quickening biography of the influence of a far-away soul of real greatness, or the still more inexplicable potency of a haunting memory; ideas and impressions, convictions and enthusiasms, may find their way to us and subdue us to the finest issues. Science itself forbids a materialistic faith and pushes us, with pained eyes, to the rim of the unseen universe; and ill indeed should we have "learned Christ" if we did not know that, as it was "expedient" for the Apostles that the Incarnate Lord should leave the narrow streets of an earthly disciple-life, in order that the Spirit might take His place, and fill the expanding "City of God" as it spread over the wide world, so it is "expedient for us," not to hear the Voice of God approaching us by one *sense* in the stillness of the night, as did young Samuel, but rather to find Him standing over against all our faculties and experiences and filling the entire compass of our manifold and growing being. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more," for "we look not at the things which are seen": the pipes of the organ, the structure of the vocal chords, the wires of the telegraphist; but at the things which are not seen, the message of Divine love, the evangel of pardon, the music that frees the heart of care and fills it with joy. "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Nor is our question, perhaps I ought to add—does God so speak to us as to make known truth not discoverable anywhere else, or by any other way, thus giving us something absolutely original as *Revelation*, and making a permanent addition to that "Word of God" contained in the Old and New Testament Scriptures—Scriptures which are the *history* of the manifestation of God to inspired souls? Revelation in its strict and high sense of making known for the first time truths and facts concerning God, man, and eternity, implies and necessitates Inspiration; but Inspiration does not imply and necessitate Revelation.*

*In his *Thoughts on Revelation*, J. McCleod Campbell emphasises the distinction between the Inspiration of *Revelation* and the Inspiration of the *Divine Life:* a distinction which is ably illustrated and enforced in the masterly work of Prof. Ladd on *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. II., 460, *et seq*. Revelation is a special, original, unique "product" of an inspired personality such as Moses, or Paul, or Christ; a "product" susceptible of detachment from the inspired person, and of reproduction in the spoken, or written, or printed form.

The term "inspiration" has been freely applied to preachers of late. But what is an inspired preacher? What is "the gift of prophecy"? Is the inspired preacher anything more than a man speaking to his fellows (1) with magnetic intensity of emotion; (2) out of an unwavering conviction that he is uttering that which is at once absolutely and verifiably *true*, and of unspeakably momentous issues to the audience addressed; and (3) in this case uttering truths obtained from the Bible at first hand; but (4) wrought into and made part of the substance of a rich personal experience, and an elevated character? But, it may be asked, ought we to *let down* the word "Inspiration" to that level? Is it not better to retain it to describe the unique and exceptional facts represented in the "words spoken unto the fathers by the prophets," and Apostles, and Christ, and embodied in the Old and New Testaments? No doubt it is, if you can. But you cannot. Man makes his own dictionary, lifts up and lets down the significance of terms as he pleases, and the word "inspiration," like other theological terms, has been so broadened in its range, that it is no longer safe to employ it in its older and more restricted meaning. Plimsoll, it was said, was inspired in his famous Parliamentary explosion on behalf of the sailors. Poets are inspired, literary men are inspired (*Cf.* Emerson's Essay on *Inspiration*), so are artists, so are preachers. There is the inspiration qualifying for a vocation, and there is the "inspiration of the Divine Life."

"There are," says Goethe, "many echoes in the world, but few voices." Revelation is rare. Inspiration is common. Revelation is unique and original. Inspiration *may* issue only in an echo to him who listens, but in what is a living and new experience to him who speaks. So far as I can gather, Samuel, though inspired so as to become the first in the *regular succession* of the prophets of Israel, received no new truth, saw no facts going beyond the first principles of religion taught by Moses; but he grasped those truths with a reality and clearness all his own, incorporated them with his experience, disengaged them from the investing superstitions of paganism, and uttered them with a contagious enthusiasm and strength of conviction that made them a regenerating force in the nation. If we may not enter into the "goodly fellowship of the prophets" in that inspiration, then, indeed, many of us will have a heart-ache that is incurable, life will be a crushing load, the rugged ways of duty will be desolate and dreary, and all our hope for humanity cut off. There is "no open vision." We are left orphans—the poor, and destitute, and despairing children of a dumb God.

With deep solicitude, then, we enquire, what are the facts? Is there, or is there not, a Present Day Inspiration?

No doubt the prophets of God were exceptional men. All are not apostles. All are not prophets. All do not work miracles. All have not gifts of healing. Every Greek is not a Plato in philosophical insight, an Aristotle in reasoning, or a Pericles in eloquence and political capacity. Every Italian is not a Dante in song, or an

Angelo in sculpture. Every Englishman is not a Shakespeare in dramatic genius, a Macaulay in historical portrait-painting, or a Pitt in statesmanship. Every singer is not a Beethoven or a Mozart. Every Christian is not a Luther. Even amongst the prophets of the Old Testament there are greater and lesser lights. Joshua is not a Moses. Elisha is not the equal of Elijah ; and Isaiah, filled with the breath of God, soars to heights of rapturous consecration and sublime utterance that leave all his brother prophets far behind. So Samuel is an exceptional man, exceptional in his birth, in his dedication, in his training, in the all-subduing tension of will, in his place in the line of prophets, and in his work as the last and most glorious of the Judges, and the fore-runner of the illustrious David.

But in God's world, the exceptional is always the evangelistic. Divinely-anointed men preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, deliver the captives, and herald the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. God never makes any man for himself, least of all a prophet. No scripture is of any private interpretation. Its sweep is world-wide, and inspiration is for humanity. The Spirit of God is everywhere, underlies all humanity ; but, the carbon-points from which the electricity that fills and bathes air, earth, and sky, streams out in lanes of brilliant light, are those elect souls in whom He dwells and has free course. All Israel is God's Shekinah, but in these apt personalities the glory of the Divine Presence shows itself with arresting and world-illumining splendour. Thus the prophet Samuel, conspicuous as a Prince and a Leader of those in whom the free Spirit of God works with distinctive energy, illustrates the universal freedom of prophetic

activity in the Hebrew community, freshly embodies the Law expressed by Moses, that Inspiration is without limits or impediments *from above*, and is never exclusive in its intended range, or exhausted in its available supply, but seizes, moves, and fills, prepared and sympathetic souls, as electricity seizes, moves, and fills, a strip of resinous silk.* So the Voice, waking the quiet of the chamber of the consecrated lad, becomes a gospel for every wakeful soul, who, with the eagerness of unfed hope, and the calm trustfulness of the child of the Kingdom, listens for God, ready to hear all He says and do all He bids.

But supposing we had a lingering doubt as to the teaching of the Older Testament, we cannot have any misgiving as to the fact that Christ asserts over and over again the doctrine of the continuity of Inspiration. It is His consolation amongst the irritations and disquiet of opposition and defeat, that His Father reveals the truths of His Kingdom, to the open, clinging, and trustful hearts of "babes" like young Samuel; and it is His farewell solace to His followers, in their sorrow over their crude ideas, their partial knowledge, and intolerable feebleness, that when the Holy Spirit is come, He will tell them "all things, and bring all things to their remembrance" that He has said to them in His familiar ministry. He will stimulate their faculties, lift the damp mists off the face of truth, reveal the meaning of the law of Moses, interpret the grace

* In accordance with this principle Samuel established Societies, or "Schools of the Prophets," in which men might undergo such training as should enable them the more readily to reach the conditions requisite for receiving the Divine Inspiration.

and truth of the character and message of Christ, fill them with perceptive and receptive energy, charge them with the noblest impulse, and so flood them with life and power, that they will instruct, quicken, and save the world. From a long experience of the fulfilment of that gracious promise, John the Evangelist says of the Christians of his day, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things";—*i.e.*, all things that pertain to righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. "Since the beginning of the world," says Isaiah, "men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." Exulting in the plenitude of the Revelations made by the Spirit, Paul cites this language of the prophet in order to add the instructive contrast, "but God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now," is still the word of God to us men. "We know in part and prophecy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then, that which is in part shall be done away." Still the perfect never comes; it is always coming and coming, enlarging and increasing. It doth not yet appear what we shall know or what we shall be and do. The last word of God has not been spoken. The last counsel for a perplexed humanity has not been given. God has still more light to break forth from His Holy Word. He and it are exhaustless. We are but at the dawn of Revelation, and there is not and cannot be any "finis" with the Eternal. Let us, therefore, rejoicingly expect to partake of the Divine Nature, to receive of the

fulness of the Spirit, and grace for grace, in ceaseless continuity.

A third line of enquiry is open to us, taking us back in some sense upon our first and second. It is this. Are the *results* of Samuel's Inspiration possible to us, or is there anything in them forbidding us to entertain the thought of entering into the goodly fellowship of the prophets?

We know we may walk with God as did Enoch, preach righteousness with Noah, become the children of Abraham in heroic faith and total surrender of will, fight against ourselves with Jacob, battle for social purity with Joseph, assist in building God's House with Moses, share the strength of Samson, and drink the pure streams of domestic joy with Ruth and Naomi; is it likely then we are shut out from the enjoyment of the sublimest issues of the inspiration of the Spirit of God?

Those issues, as seen in the life and work of Samuel, are these four; an enlarged and purified conception of God; a strong and governing sway for ethical ideas of God and of life; a contagious impulsion of others towards God and righteousness; and a fine susceptibility of advance in religious, social, and national activity.

Samuel knew the Lord through the word of the Lord revealed to him. God spake to him, and the speech was a revelation of the Speaker. "The Lord appeared in Shiloh, for the Lord revealed Himself in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord. And the Word of the Lord came to all Israel."* The prophet is one who speaks forth the message

* 1 Samuel iii. 7-21: iv. 1.

he has received from God and incorporated with His life and experience. He knows God, His purpose and care, His wealth of mercy, His inflexible rectitude, His loving heart, His eternal laws, the conditions of His service, and the nature of His rule. This is the initial and all-inclusive effect of Inspiration. To know God—not so as to define Him, but to enjoy Him ; not so as to demonstrate His being, but to live in and by His love and power ; not so as to comprehend Him, but to trust and follow Him ; this is the gift of the Spirit. Know you not that our cultured keenness debates the personality of God with intensified despair, discusses the Divine attributes amid gathering gloom, and denies the real humanity in God with increased energy ; but the Spirit of God "takes of the things of Christ"—His redeeming ideas, His "mind," His way of looking at life and death, duty and destiny ; His majestic calm, His flashing anger at inveterate and hypocritical wrong-doers, His habitual pity for the lost and suffering, His spotless sanctity, His glowing self-sacrifice ; and showing them to us, we see the Father and it sufficeth us ; and it alone suffices us. Do not men also still quarrel over the Bible, its contents and its composition, its authorship and authority ; and have not we a burden of perplexity unlifted till the Spirit shines into our hearts, with a light that gleams from us on the sacred page, enabling us to see it as a *history* of the manifestation of God to men, and to hear it as a Voice speaking to what is deepest in our nature, as a power of God living and active, "sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart"?

Well may we pray with Thomas à Kempis :—

1. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

I am Thy servant, grant me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth ; let Thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel in times past said unto Moses, 'Speak thou unto us, and we will hear : let not the Lord speak unto us lest we die.'

Not so, Lord, not so, I beseech Thee : but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets, but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets : for Thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without Thee can profit nothing.

2. They indeed may utter words, but they cannot give the Spirit.

Most beautifully do they speak, but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They teach the letter, but Thou openest the sense : they bring forth mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things.

They declare Thy commandments, but Thou helpest us to fulfil them.

They point out the way, but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work outwardly only, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water, but Thou givest the increase.

They cry aloud in words, but Thou impartest understanding.

3. Let not Moses therefore speak unto me, but Thou, O Lord my God, the everlasting Truth; lest I die, and prove unfruitful, if I be only warned outwardly, and not inflamed within:

Lest it turn to my condemnation—the word heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed.

Speak, therefore, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; for Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak Thou unto me, to the comfort, however imperfect, of my soul, and to the amendment of my whole life, and to Thy praise and glory and honour everlasting."*

Next in gravity and in fruitfulness, we see in this inspired hero a moral illumination, an inflexible fidelity to his vocation, and an uncompromising adherence to eternal ethical principles, which infallibly assert his intimate fellowship with a righteous God. He begins his youthful ministry by the delivery of a pain-filled message, asserting the unrelaxed operation of the laws of God on the rapacity and profligacy of the sons of Eli, a man of saintly devoutness and religious fervour, but a father of foolish leniency and unpardonable weakness. Samuel, young as he is—a mere lad—tells his story every whit, omits not a word from fear for himself, or weak consideration for the feelings of Israel's Judge.† So noble a courage has its fitting crown in the stern demand for absolute obedience

* Imitation of Christ, Book III. c. ii. † 1 Samuel iii. 18.

to God he makes on King Saul, and his intrepid refusal to accept any shuffles and excuses for a self-willed defiance of the authority of the God of Israel. "To obey," says he, rising to the loftiest heights of the sun-filled realm of truth, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."* Holiness is the highest proof of inspiration. The evolution of morality, the clearing of the ideas of righteousness and peace, the application of the principles of eternal truth to the events and crises of the home and of the state ; this is the prophet's chief work in all ages. Foreseeing and foretelling the specific occurrences of the far-off future are but as dust in the balance compared with the infinite importance and endless results of the clear intuition of moral truths, the energetic application of moral principles, and the creation of a sustained and passionate love for whatever is right, and good, and true. "The Lord let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground," for they were a part of that truth which, however slowly it be revealed, when once here, endureth to all generations.

Samuel, like his successors, was a prophet-politician. His chief care was the common weal. He saw a people weak and disunited, foolish and fractious, licentious and profligate, idolatrous and corrupt ; and with glowing intensity of emotion and ringing eloquence he sent out his manifesto against the reigning idolatry, re-asserted the second great commandment against the worship of images,

* 1 Samuel xv. 22, 23.

urged repentance and searching of heart, and confederated the tribes together on the basis of a true idea of God, a spiritual worship, and a faithful keeping of the law of righteousness. With prophetic fulness of contagious force he founded the Hebrew Puritanism—battled against the cherished household "gods"—assured their worshippers that they were vain and profitless things, "nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity"—and turned their hearts in trust and hope to the God of Abraham and Moses. Then baptizing them in the flowing river of his own courage and patriotism, he delivered them from their oppressors, and prepared the way for the order and civilization of the days of Saul and David. Inspiration has great *national* uses. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," law, justice, and moral order. Every true and consecrated prophet is an earnest patriot, acutely alive to the *real* perils of his country, sympathetic with all its struggles for a purer morality, a higher culture, and a richer joy; and heartily co-operates in every effort that illumines right, extends liberty, and brings men to God. Love of men, evinced in practical service of their wide interests, is the sign and proof of the anointing of God.

Hence the inspired man is always in the van of progress. He does not and cannot lag behind. His possession of the Spirit makes "the coming life cry always, 'On and On'"! Even though it be against his immediate interests, and in the face of his cherished methods and associations, yet he triumphs over himself and carries forward movements in which "the old order changeth, yielding place to new." Had Samuel died young, it has been suggested, his place

in the annals of Israel would have been far lower, and his value as a pattern of the ways of the Spirit of God would have been much less. But he lived to bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, the source of a perennial youth, and the inspiration to a constant, social and national advancement. Naturally he was loath to separate himself from the order of the "Judges," of which he was the last and most illustrious example, and it was not till after prolonged suffering, and the suppression of intense personal antipathy to the kingly form of government, that he could inaugurate and guide the nation into a new era. But he did it, and did it with consummate skill, electing the right men for the task, watching over Saul with a father's affection, and grieving over his failure with a father's sorrow, then providing for the far-off future by the choice and consecration of the son of Jesse, the most famous king of the Hebrew race. There is no finer sight in the long and chequered annals of inspired men than the youthful ability for national progress shown by Samuel in the closing years of his long life. "Hast thou not heard, that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." The Spirit of God is the Spirit of eternal progress. With an infinite patience, and an unquivering steadfastness, "the pupils of the Spirit," unfettered by past victories, uncramped by long-used machinery, even though bearing their own name as inventors and patentees,

> "Choose to walk high with sublimer dread,
> Rather than crawl in safety;"

elect to herald new eras, initiate vast reforms, build up the new by the side of the old; and so

"Fashion acts that are to be,
When they shall lie in darkness silently."

No inspired man can be a frozen pedant, a blind dry-as-dust, a galvanized corpse, frantically clutching at yesterday as though it were better than to-day, and talking of God as though He had revealed Himself as the "I was," instead of the "I AM." The breath of the Almighty lifts him out of the darkness of a selfish stagnation and makes him the harbinger of the coming day.

And, as though to deliver us from the temptation that Inspiration is not continuous, evidence is not lacking, that in and through all, the prophet remains a man, liable to human infirmities, as he is exposed to human sorrows. His inspiration does not shut the door against misfortune, nor preclude the possibility of wrong. Samuel's sons "turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and prevented judgment"; and Samuel himself misconceived the divine motive, and misinterpreted the divine action, in the matter of the destruction of the Amalekites, "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."* God's

* I Samuel xv. 3.—Even supposing provocation had been given by the great Bedouin tribe (xiv. 48) of Amalekites, and that the hereditary enemies of Israel fully deserved the inexorable severity with which they were visited, yet this putting to death of "the infant and suckling, of ox and sheep," is not defensible in the clearer light and loftier ethic of the New Testament. The act is, in the words of Canon Mozley, "the result of the undisciplined passion of justice working without the perception of the limit which man's individuality imposed upon it." No one can justify either it, or Jael's deed of blood (Judges iv. 17-22), or endorse the patriotic but mistaken approbation given by Deborah to such base treachery and cruelty. Jael acts a lie. It does not cease to be a lie because it is in the Bible, nor does the Bible commend it by inserting it, any more than a newspaper is supposed to approve every act recorded in its columns. Nor does the claim to a divine command alter the fact that Samuel's address to Saul, at once in the *motive* it suggests, and in the relentless severity it enjoins, partakes of the infirmity of the

Spirit does not treat men as the unconscious organs of the divine, mere passive instruments of a higher and stronger current of power; but whilst illumining and quickening their various faculties, and augmenting their strength, leaves them free; and being free, liable to the dimness of vision belonging to their time, and to the misconceptions consequent upon a partial and fragmentary Revelation.

Therefore, not even our depressing sense of mistake, our mist-bound ideas, our feeling that God has cramped dwelling in our souls, should hinder us from believing in, working for, and hastening to, a present-day Inspiration. Each element of this four-fold result bears witness to a universal need, and to a possible universal experience; prophesies that "when He is come, He will convince the *world* of sin, and righteousness, and judgment;" be "poured out on all flesh," so that all flesh may see the full salvation of God.

Irresistible as this answer is, it only forces on us a further question, scarcely less perplexing, *viz.*, how may we be sure that the voice that speaks within us is the voice of God, and not of self; that the impressions, ideas, and convictions are the result of Divine inspiration, and not the subtle temptations of evil, or the disguised promptings of a foolish

time, is a sign of the defective and partial morality of the age, and one of the strongest witnesses to the need for the clearer revelation and perfect morality of Jesus Christ. How vast is the interval between that call to war and the rebuke administered by Christ to James and John when they wished to use heaven's lightning for destroying the reluctant Samaritans!

and fevered fancy? Ay, there's the rub! That's the insuperable difficulty!

Fortunately for us this is not a new problem. It is as old as the other. The Jews of Berea had to face it with less light than we have, for they were invited to pass into a new realm of thought and action, and required an unerring guide. Paul and Silas preached the Word concerning Christ to them, and they received it with all openness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so; many of them, therefore, believed. They went at once to the *best* test they had; used the supreme verifying process then in existence, looked into the Hebrew accounts of the manifestation of God in the past; compared them with that which was reported to them by the missionaries, and entered into rest and power.

Now we have this advantage over the Bereans, that the Scriptures are larger for us than they were for them, and that the message which they tested has endured every possible trial, outlived every vicissitude of human fortune, and having never failed to prove its Divine reality and growing power, has become our *touchstone* of truth. They went to the Old Testament to see whether the things said about Christ and His salvation were according to the law and the prophets. We can take all the movements of the Spirit of God in our hearts to-day to Christ, to see whether they are in accordance with His Spirit and teaching, with His redeeming purpose and kingdom, with His sacrifice and ethics; with His character and Ideal. He is our infallible test. For of Him, and of Him only, is it said that He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Even the greatest of the sons of men failed,

and failed signally. Each one joins in the universal confession, "I have sinned." Abraham is not without fault Moses fails in self-government. Job sins with his lips. Buddha laments his errors. Mahomet asks God for forgiveness. Christ does not. No prayer for pardon passes over His lips, though He bids others seek it. He is without spot. The miracle of human holiness; the proof of the highest inspiration is perfected in Him.

Nor is this all; but on the positive side of His nature He is equally unmatched. The Spirit is given to Him "*without measure.*" There is no restriction whatever; none from above, none from below, none from *within*. He has the Spirit in His totality descending and *abiding* upon Him. He is, therefore, the complete and absolute Revelation of God. Others were but fragments, "broken lights." In Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. God was in Christ. He is the pattern and type of the fully-inspired life – and in this infallible Person we have the all-sufficing test, the one supreme means of verifying the movements of the Spirit of God within us.

Yet another question. If this gift of the Spirit be open to all souls, and this test be so easy of application, why is it that Samuel, of all the lads in Israel, hears the Divine Voice, and no one else; that Isaiah and Paul are inspired, and so many of their contemporaries are not? Why? Well, why did mathematics and colours speak with such captivating sweetness to the mind of Clerk Maxwell? Why did music penetrate and sway the soul of young Mozart? Why could not Flaxman rest in his father's shop without modelling and sketching? Why did

Augustine hear the summons falling on his ear as he walked in the orchards at Tagaste; "Take and read, Take and read"? Look into their minds, and you will find the same law at work. Scientific things are scientifically discerned; musical things are musically discerned; artistic things are artistically discerned; and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Their natures and training offered the appropriate organs and conditions, and the inspiration followed. To the fitting organ for hearing there comes the guiding Voice of God.

Few "cases" more vividly illustrate this law than Samuel's. At least six signs of fitness show themselves: his godly descent: his devout dedication for life to the service of God; his early spiritual training; his pre-eminent prayerfulness; his glowing love of God; and his unfaltering obedience to the Divine will.

Samuel was born of an inspired mother. Hannah was a woman of genius, true to God, fervidly devout, serenely trustful, and blossoms at least once into spiritual song, with summer luxuriance and beauty. More propitious pre-natal conditions no prophet could have had.

Very early the boy was expressly dedicated to the special service of Jehovah. Living in an Age of Vows, he was placed under all the solemn sanctities of the Nazarite life, and given from childhood to a vocation which filled his eager mind with the thought of God and of His worship. The quickening influence of that spiritual atmosphere followed swiftly, and acted nourishingly upon the germs of power with which he started life.

Inspired personalities inspire. Communion with the prophetess Hannah, and with Judge Eli, would instruct

guide, warn, and enrich the life of this youth to an unprecedented degree. In one was all the moulding force of a mother's spiritual affection, in the other the highest wisdom of the age stood ready to direct and aid. Eli was Samuel's Bible. He was in the line of Divine Revelation. In him was stored the lore of Abraham and Jacob, of Moses and Joshua ; and it was his delight to set young Samuel in the right attitude for receiving the Word of God. Ah ! friends, we do not begin soon enough in our spiritual training to grow many prophets for God. We are sceptical about the laws of the Spirit. Our efforts are delayed till evil gets entrenched in the heart, and bad habits are formed. We need to start sooner. We ought to be first. We want a larger confidence in the spiritual susceptibilities of the young. Do we ever read of a prophet called of God in *old* age ? Does not proficiency in any department of life depend upon an early consecration ? Did not Nelson decide upon his profession at twelve years of age, and the Duke of Marlborough at fifteen ? Was not Sir Robert Peel, Premier of England, educated by his father for the House of Commons ? Robert Hall, too, was the pastor of a Church at nineteen, and Charles H. Spurgeon startled this metropolis before he was twenty-one. Robertson of Brighton, Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice, received their vocation in early manhood ? John Wesley was only twenty-five when he planted the first seeds of Methodism ; Calvin wrote his Institutes before he was twenty-four ; and Luther was preaching the doctrines of faith when he was under thirty. "St. Francis of Assisi, renounced the world at the age of twenty-four. St. Francis Xavier, entered the Order, in which he was to play so great a part, at the age of twenty-

eight, and was preaching at Goa before he was thirty-six. St. Francis de Saules renounced the world at the age of twenty-six, and was in full career as a religious preacher before he was thirty." John, the youngest, if not the earliest of the disciples of Christ, saw further into the recesses of the mysterious nature of the Son of God than any of his fellow apostles. Paul, though last in arriving within the apostolic circle, had been a strenuous seeker after God as a "young man," and Jesus, the son of Mary, was fully set on doing the business of His Father in Heaven at the age of twelve. I am sure that if we would understand and obey these laws, of the pre-natal basis of prophetic endowment, dedicate our children from birth to the highest vocation, and secure them the continued fellowship and guidance of inspired personalities, many of our sons and daughters would respond to the Divine call, and gladly obey the Divine mandate.

But the Source of all things is God, and it is in communion with Him our nature is opened to the fullest access of His Spirit. Sir Joshua Reynolds reveals the secret of the inspired life in his pleading and pathetic picture of young Samuel at Prayer. All Israel knew the long, piercing cry of the prophet to the Lord. In their perils his intercessions had been their deliverance, and in their battles his prayers had secured them victory. The sweetest gospel he could give them was the assurance of his continued supplication. He was a man of prayer. George Macdonald gives beautiful expression to the connection between communion and inspiration in one of the prayers of that God-filled spirit, *David Eglinbrod*, when he cries, "Be Thou by us even as a mother sits by the bedside of her

ailing child all the long night; only be Thou nearer to us, even in our very souls, and watch over the world of dreams that they make for themselves. Grant that more and more thoughts of Thy thinking may come into our hearts day by day, till there shall be at last an open road between Thee and us, and Thy angels may ascend and descend upon us, so that we may be in Thy heaven, even while we are upon Thy earth, Amen."

'*An open road between Thee and us.*" That is it. There is the inspired life. Think you God our Father will ever desert that "open road"? Never! His delight is with the heart that is contrite and the spirit that listens for His word.

Now the one thing that makes an "open road" between the soul and God is *love*, love from the Father above and love from us to Him; and that which keeps it open is *obedience*. Samuel the prophet is a flaming fire of zeal for God. His soul burns with awe-filled love of the Eternal, and he can solace his spirit in his age by an uncontradicted assertion made before Israel of his integrity, fidelity, and righteousness. It is an anticipation of the law of Jesus. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. If a man love Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

Love surrendering itself wholly to God in sacrificial obedience opens the whole being to Him, and invites the surging fulness of His energy to enter and rule. The river of life that comes from the heart of the invisible Father flows close by the path of loving obedience.

If, then, any of us lack the strength of a daily inspiration, and who does not? let him ask of God, with a fully dedicated spirit, an intense yearning to glorify God, a total suppression of selfish desire, and a sustained doing of all the Will of God, and He will do exceeding abundant above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, even the power of the risen Christ, Who hath already given us of His Spirit.

Dear children, God is not far from any one of you. Boys and girls, open your hearts to His love. Listen for the tones of His voice above the din of the world, and in the stillness of your inward life. He has guiding words for your feet, light for your eyes, and strength for your will. Note the sayings of the Hannahs and Elis He sends to you, and let them take you to Him, so that you may hear God Himself speaking to *you*. Never doubt Him. Be sure, always sure, of His loving help, and of His gracious protection. Say, like Samuel, "*Speak, for Thy servant heareth!*"

And shall not we all make the prayer of Moses our own this day: "Would that all the Lord's people were"—readers merely? *No!* teachers only? *No!*—but "*prophets,*" prophets of the living and redeeming God!

"WERE I chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil doing. For God, sure, esteems the growth and completion of one virtuous person, more than the restraint of ten vicious." MILTON.

"Character is the chief element (of life); for it is both a result and a cause: a result of influences, and a cause of results." GARFIELD.

"That which thy sires to thee have handed down
By thine own labour make again thine own
Whate'er it is thou dost not use, will be
A heavy burden and a load to thee.
Only what from the present moment springs,
Created in the present, profit brings." GOETHE.

"Beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man."
GEORGE ELIOT.

"Whose spirit lent a fire
Even to the dullest peasant in his camp."
SHAKESPEARE.

"By nature tuned,
And constant disposition of his thoughts
To sympathy with men, he was alive
To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,
And all that was endured." WORDSWORTH.

"Science may prove the insignificance of this globe in the scale of creation, but it cannot prove the insignificance of man." B. DISRAELI

Man-Building.

"THEN SAMUEL TOOK THE HORN OF OIL AND ANOINTED DAVID IN THE MIDST OF HIS BRETHREN; AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON DAVID FROM THAT DAY FORWARD." —1 *Samuel* xvi. 13.

EMERSON says, "the main enterprise of the world, for splendour and for extent is the upbuilding of a man." Of that enterprise, David, the son of Jesse, the victor of Goliath, the King of Israel, and the Poet of Humanity, is one of the most signal and fruitful examples. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find his peer. Many Hebrews have done excellently, but this great-grandson of Ruth, the Moabitess, taken all in all, has excelled most of his illustrious race. No doubt Moses surpasses him in majesty of bearing, awe-inspiring sternness, power of initiative in legislation, and the application of a wide and rich culture to the creation of a nation out of a horde of recently-emancipated slaves; but David is more original and creative in his genius, more versatile in mind, broader in sympathy,

less constrained in devotion, and glows with an intenser love in his religion. Joseph may have equalled him in capacity for government and fertility of resource, as he certainly excelled him in the capital quality of social purity, for David's ghastly outbreaks of vice and cruelty dye his character with a stain the seas of time will never wash out; but in his sharp agony of penitence, unquenchable devotion to righteousness, and ever-reviving and conquering trust in the Eternal, neither the Old Testament nor the New gives us his equal. As the epic of Paradise Lost, out-matches any one of the creations of the bard of Avon, so some of the oracles of Isaiah rank higher in brilliant imagery and exalted eloquence, than the songs of David; but in the Hebrew Psalter, Revelation soars into a new and higher realm, and fulfils a wider mission as the comforter of those who mourn, the solace of the sad, the relief of the distressed, the herald of divine deliverance, and the guarantee of the divine presence and care. In fact David is not only the topmost man of his century, but also the climax of the best life of the chosen people of God, the consummate flower of the religion of Moses in its best days.

Hence, with a full recognition of his place in the building up of the life of men, the Hebrew annalists record his career with a fulness of detail, warmth of colour, and rapture of feeling, that belong to no other biography of the ancient Revelation; so that we know "the darling of Israel" as well as we know General Gordon, and better than we know the Apostles Paul and John; as well as we know St. Augustine from his "Confessions" and sermons, and far better than we know Socrates from the reports of Xenophon and the dialogues of Plato.

What then is this man, whose rank is so high, and the processes of whose "upbuilding" are so fully described?

Clearly, a man of striking mental and moral opulence, wonderfully composite in character, rich in gifts and richer in achievements, singularly able and passing through the most contradictory and educating experiences with lightning-like swiftness; a poet and a politician; a chief of brigands and a champion of the armies of God; a vassal of the Philistines, and the Creator of the Hebrew "fatherland;" at one time "hunted like a partridge upon the mountains," and at another, seated in splendid ease in his cedar house at Jerusalem; now a homeless exile, almost without a friend, and now the hero of the patriotic ballads of his people; gifted in evoking medicinal music from the strings of his harp, and victorious in handling the sling and the stone; tremulously responsive to the slightest whisper of the Voice of God, and deaf as a stone to the shouted threatenings of bold and fearless men; simple as a child in his hunger for love, in beautiful humility, and in frank self-avowal; but prudent, cautious, and self-controlled in the thick and onset of danger; meditative as a philosophical recluse, fond of solitude and nourished by silence, and yet strenuous and eager in public affairs, leaping to the front with dashing enthusiasm in violently agitated times; possessed of a swift sympathetic vision for the beauties of earth and sky, and yet reading the facts of the spiritual world with the ease and accuracy of a Seer; magnanimously forbearing towards the Lord's anointed, but unrelentingly severe against the implacable foes of God and right; tender-hearted, even to folly, as a father; but wise, sagacious, and powerful as a Ruler of men, as is proved by his knitting

together the scattered tribes of Israel into an invincible unity with the threefold cord of order, discipline, and religion; whole-hearted, in spite of his faults, in his love of integrity, and intense, even to white heat, in his love of God; thus passing by a divine right not only to the primacy amongst human heroes, but to a foremost place in the calendar of the Saints of God, as the possessor of an everlasting name, and a luminous illustration for all the ages of the historic saying of one of his predecessors, "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

But it is the real humanness of David that wins all hearts, and perpetually renews his influence in the thought and life of the world. It is David, the man, the young man, *the man in the making*, that fixes our gaze, compels our deepening interest and secures our increasing advantage. He is not a priest exciting a momentary curiosity by superb attire and solemn acting, or kindling awe by an assumed mastery of the secrets of the invisible world. He is not a prophet, starting up out of the desert sands, like the Bedouin Elijah before Ahab, and terrifying us into submission. Nor indeed, is it his kingly greatness and courtly magnificence that holds us spell-bound in his presence; for we love him long before he is king, and whilst the Jerusalem throne is still a distant and appetising vision. Nor again, is it his physique that gains upon us; for though his figure is graceful, his face radiant, eyes large and beaming, hair red or auburn, and his whole body so well knit that he is lithe of limb and agile in movement, swift as a wild gazelle, and strong enough to break a bow of bronze, yet we see with Samuel that he is not tall and commanding like his brother Eliab, imperial in build and mien, "every inch a king,"

like Saul, but in "outward appearance," as in vocation, takes rank only with the common herd of men. It is rather that we see in him one of our very selves, a man springing from the people, sharing their lot, and bearing their misfortunes, fighting evil in his boyish home, and watching over his sheep with a shepherd's heart, bruised in the struggle against his own faults, now being overcome with frenzied passion, and now breaking out into atheistic despair; yielding to falsehood, and hating himself with perfect hatred for his meanness and cowardice; but battling on, and still on, using as his strongest weapon that true trust in a spiritual God which is within every man's grasp, and of which he never relaxes his hold, but believes, hopes, fights, and soars till he passes away to be satisfied in conformity to the divine likeness, with a sweet and lovely swan-song on his lips expressive of his faith in the eternal order and enduring progress of the world.*

What then is the full tale of this man's upbuilding? How was he put together? Whence came the force of that spiritual chemistry by which the ordinary elements of our human nature were so wondrously combined and made to effect so signal a result?

Remember first, *man is a spirit.* We know him as body, as we know electricity by a shock from a battery or a message from a distant friend, or as we know chemical force by its effects. But the body is only the wire along which the spiritual electricity runs, the case in which the

*2 Samuel xxiii. 1-7.

actual watch ticks, the pipes and reeds through which the soul of the organist thrills us, the cage in which the bird sings, the tent in which the man dwells. The man is not made when the bony skeleton is made, not even when a thinking brain is made, aye, and not even—though it be most heterodox to say it, and the speaker be excommunicated forthwith—when a fortune is made. The man is not in the till but in the character, not in the nerve but in the conscience, not in the sense but in the regal will, not in "the outward appearance" but in "the heart."

Remember next, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Spirit builds spirit. Soul makes soul. "Man does not live by bread alone"—he cannot live without it, but he does not live the life of a *man* by it, "but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is Revelation which makes and nourishes manhood; gives the bread of truth for the intellect, satisfying righteousness for the conscience, and God Himself, the Father and Saviour of the soul, for the heart. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Standing in full view of these eternal principles you are not surprised that the Hebrew historian, with an exuberant enthusiasm and an unquestioning assurance, accounts for David—for all he was and all he did—by the simple and comprehensive statement, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward"—came decisively and clearly, and continued to come with character-building energy for evermore. Whatever David is that is spiritual and God-like is due to that benignant advent; and whatever he accomplishes that advances the well-being of Israel, reveals God's will and extends His sway, results from that

invisible presence. David is "the fruit of the Spirit." His tender "love," singing "joy," flowing "peace," placid "long-suffering," conquering "kindness," real "goodness," persisting "faithfulness," Moses-like "meekness," and early "self-control," constitute at once a witness to the power of the Spirit and an illustrative definition, by anticipation, of the "fruit" that grows on that Sacred Tree.

With similar prominence does this fact bulge in all David's references to himself. Reviewing his career, recounting its most note-worthy features, and explaining his conspicuous successes, he sings with gratitude,

> "For *Thou* lightest my lamp,
> Jehovah, my God, makes my darkness radiant.
> For by Thee I can break through a fence,
> And by my God I can leap over a wall.
> Yea, Thou gavest me the shield of Thy salvation;
> Thy right hand held me up,
> And Thy humility made me great."*

"Thy humility," *i.e.*, Thy condescension, Thy eagerness to dwell in the heart that is contrite, to guide the spirit that looks for Thy leading, to give strength to those that fight for Thee, to reward all those who serve Thee—this hath made me great. And when he has reached the noon-tide splendour of his chequered and strenuous life, and, like a lion sprung from its native lair, has seized Jerusalem, that has so long defied the armies of Israel, as his prey; sees that his sovereignty is undisputed and hears God's prophet Nathan foretell his continuing prosperity, his soul is filled with self-abasement and praise, and he exclaims, "Who

* Psalm xviii. 28, 29, 35. *The Book of Psalms*, translated by the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., *pp.* 21 and 221.

am I, O Lord God! And what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto, and this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? For Thou hast done all these great things."*

But decisively and fully as this exposition of the upbuilding is given in the Hebrew Scriptures it does not content us. We still ask for light as to the way along which the universal Spirit of God came to, and took possession of him, the method by which the diverse materials of his nature were compacted into a spiritual and vital unity, and the processes used in raising them to their maximum of energy and serviceableness.

Nor is the narrative in any way unwilling to satisfy our desires It lays bare the growth of David from first to last, fixes the hour, as well as describes the act, of special inspiration; portrays the man, who is the chief organ through which God works His will on the youth; lifts the veil from his inward life prior to his consecration so that we can read its condition, and then gives such glimpses of the positive work done by the principal educational factors of his boyhood, that we seem as though we saw the Davidic building rise from base to superstructure before our eyes.

"The Spirit came upon David" on the day of his consecration to king-ship, and came by Samuel, the prophet of God. There is the day, and the man, and the Inspiration. The

*2 Samuel vii. 18—21.

anointing is the outward and visible sign of the immense formative influences of the first of Prophets on the spirit of the greatest of Kings, the symbol of the moulding power of Samuel's gentleness and severity, lofty unselfishness and flaming devotion, on the plastic nature of the youngest son of Jesse; the pictorial representation of that central truth, that the continuity and reproductiveness of spiritual force depends upon human mediation, and that the energies of God pass from age to age along the mysterious and subtle lines of sympathetic human lives. Samuel was a teacher of youth. Like all men who care more for their work, and its perennial fruitfulness, than for themselves and their poor fame, his eyes were in the future, and his soul yearned to give birth to a race of prophets, to catch and captivate the souls of the earnest and ambitious and all-daring youth, and so to perpetuate his best thought, continue his noblest life, and fulfil Israel's mission to the world. In that mood he came to Bethlehem and chose out from amongst the sons of Jesse, the one whose nature and purposes, faiths and hopes, gave the strongest proof that he had imbibed the purest spirit of the time, and was best fitted to discharge the most responsible task of the age. The anointing of David was not only the designation of a successor to Saul; it was also the crowning and perfecting of the long influence of Samuel on David's heart and character.

Josephus suggests that as the consecrating oil bathed the flowing locks and fell on the garments of the lad, the prophet "whispered" his kingly destiny in his ear, and so set his whole soul aflame with divine ambitious, far-reaching yearnings, and oppressive and goading solicitudes. It is likely enough, but whether it were so or not, it is

easily believed that in a nature of so receptive and consistent a texture as David's, contact with the man of God, who was the leading spirit of his age, must have communicated motives that would be secretly influential in giving birth to that sense of capacity for needed work which is a call of God, and that intrinsic conviction of obligation to get ready for a dimly discerned greatness which is the harbinger of a mighty future. Certainly such divine whispers have often been heard from human lips. Does not Hugh Miller fix the moment, as one of mental regeneration in which he was roused to the consciousness of the possession of a power superior to that required in shaping stones? Did not Henry Martyn start on a new and higher career after he had been made aware of his possibilities, and inspired by a friend to say, "I verily think I may do something, and I will set about it"? Were not the germs of the new life infused into Saul of Tarsus as he gazed on the angelic patience and undying devotion of Stephen, the first of Christian martyrs? It is God's law. He does not dispense with the human, He uses it. Man is saved by man. The Incarnation and the Cross are the type and pattern of all life, and of all ministry, and of all progress. God flows through man to man. Samuels anoint Davids. Isaiah gathers and trains disciples. Timothy and Titus are Paul's sons in the faith. No man sees the Divine Perfection at first. He cannot see it and live; but he beholds it subdued and softened through a beautiful life, a mother's pleading pity, a father's strong righteousness, a prophet's exulting sacrifice of himself for his country and age. We cannot and do not go immediately to God and argue our "case" with Him as Job wanted; we must first fight our battle

with our three friends, and having debated with them, we are fitted to listen to the voice of God Himself out of the whirlwinds of human care and strife. Samuel is the light by which young David reads the handwriting of Jehovah upon the walls of his spirit, learns his destiny, and prepares for his high calling. So the living God in His marvellous mercy hides Himself behind man, that not being overpowered by His splendours, we may be won to open our hearts to receive of His fulness and grace for grace. Oh brothers! who of you will be His anointing prophets this day, and go on this blessed ministry! Aged Christians, mature in thought, quickened in sympathy by experience, rich in faith, whom will you anoint for God? Care you not for the future of His kingdom? Is there no David whose spirit you can fire by the out-shining of your conviction and the heat of your enthusiasm for the salvation of men? Seize your privilege, and hand on to unborn generations the gifts of vision and power the Eternal has bestowed upon you!

Going still further back in our examination of David's history, we now ask, why is it that David of all the sons of Jesse, and of all the children of Israel, is elected by the prophet for this special consecration to kingly place and power?

The answer, fortunately for us, is as near as it is definite, and as simple and authoritative as it is decisive and divine. Speaking of Eliab, God says to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appear-

ance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." There is at once the principle of the Divine choice, and the condition of the prophetic inspiration. God sees in that lad the rightness of heart, which is the only basis for the building up of a true character ; the manifest "set" of the inward life in its faith and hope, its yearning and passion, its thought and will, towards God and goodness, which is before all things the qualification for a redeeming and renewing career amongst men. David has that inner consecration without which the outward anointing is an utterly unmeaning and damaging ceremony. "The unction of the Holy One" has preceded the symbolical oil of the prophet. For though God accepts and adopts human mediation as the principal avenue along which He meets the souls of men, He has many other ways of finding us besides that of a faith-begetting human presence. The Idea of God grows unawares upon our inward sight, and we are learning more and more about Him when no visible teacher is near and no human voice is heard. The music of His harmonious creation, the sight of the silent stars, the mute eloquence of the sun-bathed landscape, will stir "thoughts that lie too deep for tears" ; aye, even deep enough for speechless awe, or for exultant and bursting song. A soul-filling love of right, oft baffled in effort and beaten back by wrong, will force us at last on His great strength, and compel us to rest our wearied and exhausted spirits on His bosom. Somehow, I am sure, the Eternal Father will find His child, as He had found and won David by the holy enchantment of His loving-kindness long before the day that Samuel whispered his momentous future in his ear.

It were, indeed, the gravest of mistakes to regard this

day of consecration as the first descent of the Spirit of the Lord on young David's heart—

"Let no man think that sudden in a minute,
All is accomplished, and the work is done."

God does not anoint unprepared men for kingship. Young as David is, his life is hid by faith in God, and his soul knows the secret of dwelling beneath the shadow of the Almighty. The Lord, who looketh at the heart, saw there that calm trust, absorbing love, tenacious grip of right, flaming hate of wrong, oblivion of self, interest in a wider life, elevation above low and merely individual aims, a pure striving to be true, and a fixed will to make the Divine Will supreme, which are the solid and indestructible foundations of abiding character, and the prophecy of an ever-increasing usefulness. "The boy is father to the man." Not as a vaunting soldier, not even as a brave patriot, does David go forth against Goliath of Gath; "*but that all the earth may know*,"—for the fight is a missionary's evangel, and a soldier-shepherd's "apology" for God—that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, who does not give victory to mere bulk, or even to military prowess, but to sincerity of heart; to humility, purity, and largeness of soul. Yes! David's was a "good and honest heart"—prepared by the Spirit of God—"good and honest," let us say it fearlessly since it is divinely attested fact; and, therefore, the good seed sown by Samuel yields a hundred-fold harvest.

Evermore God's unseen educating ministry goes forward. He is always preparing the world's kings. True rulers are never absent. We indeed see not their crowns. No sceptre is in their hands. They do not sit on thrones. They neither

wear king's clothing, nor sit in king's houses. They are with us in our families, or looking after our sheep, or keeping our books, despised by their elder brothers, and unrecognised of all; but when the clock of time strikes, and their hour is come, they take their place and do their work, and we are debtors all. The earliest stages of regeneration are unconscious. Visibility is not the measure of reality. "The kingdom of God comes without observation." We live months and years before we talk in fluent English. We know not the day of our birth, and we cannot tell what we shall be. The issues of our acts are hidden from us. The sublime possibilities of a life that is right with God we cannot even guess. Character is a growth; not something to be bought, or got ready-made, and put off and on, like a hat. It grows from day to day, and always, and is growing now. Listlessness and apathy to the Eternal verities this morning may settle into total deafness to the voice of God ten or twenty years hence. Alertness of vision, openness to receive the Spirit, will be surprised after a while by a God-sent Samuel anointing you for a higher vocation. Ah! if we were only right in heart, what would not God do with us, and by us; what Goliaths He would slay; what disorder and chaos and misrule He would expel; what light and peace and joy He would bring into this troubled world! But we are not right within. We know it. There is an aching inside us. Our sins look us full in the face. We want *place* rather than preparation, thrones rather than disciplined ability, glittering crowns rather than true and unfaltering obedience. We crave and pant to be *thought* somebody, instead of bending our whole will on *being* as

God wills. We persuade ourselves that fame is somehow necessary to us, and is the measure of our character instead of giving no ear to human praise or censure, and keeping silent, and climbing unseen up the cloud-capped and jagged steeps of Divine duty. Indeed, like a little child that does not yet know its mother, so we are still strangers to God and His ways, though we sit in His lap, and feed on His goodness. Oh! if only we would let Him take the demon of selfishness out of our hearts, and would ourselves "will to do His will," leaving our own salvation absolutely to His care, we might then forget our own souls in sacred devotion to men, and even cling to our cross and His, for His sake and theirs. That we may grow up to this measure of fitness for His anointing let us each pray, "Create me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a steadfast spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall turn back unto Thee."

But David, we may be certain, were he guiding us, would take us another step backward in order to see the building work of God in its earlier stages; for nothing more ineradicably rooted itself in his mind, or found more pathetic expression in his songs, than the immense educational influence of his family and shepherd life.

As a boy he was a keeper of sheep, and he never forgot it. He discharged the duties of a menial, even of a slave in his father's household, felt the brunt of the scornful and imperious bearing of his elder brothers, and knew to his cost that he held a despised and insignificant place in his home. But none of these things spoiled him. His spirit was not soured by his uncongenial lot. He did not fret and chafe

under the parental yoke, but executed faithfully his allotted task, stood to his post like a true soldier, silently devoured the chagrins and vexations of his position, and wrung out of the reluctant and horny hands of labour the precious and imperishable gold of patience and heroism.

The influence of that shepherd life was never exhausted. It was the salt of his career. It fed his humility and inspired his praise; purified his thinking, and sobered and deepened his emotion. It brought him face to face with Reality; shut out the crowding and gossiping life of the city, threw him back on his own thoughts, gave him leisure and facility to strip off the shows of things and get at their heart, developed an inwardness of being that brought peace and power for evermore. It offered crises for testing and promoting his courage, in which, battling for his sheep, he slew the lion and the bear, and trained his nerve for the sterner warfare with men. It lifted his heart to God and opened his soul to the meaning of nature, so that he stored his memory with the materials which afterwards found form and voice in the most exquisite and elevating song. Thus David got his education, in the plain every-day uses of life, and was fitted for his consecration to kingship by patient, plodding, and loving service. As Moses led the sheep in the desert before he led Israel out of Egypt, as Gideon received his call to take charge of the hosts of God whilst he was thrashing wheat, as the mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha at the plough, as Matthew heard the summons to the apostolate at the toll-booth, so David got his first training for his high place amid the lowly duties of his shepherd life.

I suppose we shall learn some day, that the faithful

doing of our actual work, the doing it for use, and not merely for gain, from love of God and love of men, is recognized by Heaven as the surest preparation for future promotion and enlarged service, and that in the unerring judgment of God, the Spirit of Love lifts to heavenly rank the toil of the ploughman and the builder, the miner and the engineer, the shepherd and the fisherman, the carpenter and the servant.

Then, we shall have no need to seek change of place, in order to be ready for God's prophet with his horn of anointing oil, but only "to keep our heart right," wherever we are and whatever work we are doing, and cling to Him in simple and calm trust, assured that we are His children, and that He will neither forget us during our painful preliminary discipline; nor when our fitness for advancement is secured. "For if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Divine Builder, Thou hast begun Thy work in us; help us that we mar not Thy handiwork or hinder Thee from making it perfect for the testing-day of Jesus Christ!

"INDEED the Psalter alone, which practically was the Service Book of the Church for many ages, contains merely in the first half of it the sum of personal and social wisdom. The 1st, 8th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 23rd, and 24th Psalms well learned and believed, are enough for all personal guidance; the 48th, 72nd, and 75th have in them the law and prophecy of all righteous government; and every real triumph of Natural Science is anticipated in the 104th."

RUSKIN.—*Bible of Amiens*, 132.

"To have the great poetic heart
Is more than all poetic fame."

TENNYSON.

"Their very power lies as much in truthfulness of tone, and absoluteness of conviction, as in beauty of form; and they will be held worthy of earnest study only by those whose God is their God." ELLEN WATSON, 163.

"And despite all changes, chances,
And despite the death bell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming;
Help, some angel! Stay this dreaming.
As the bird sang in the branches,
Sing God's comfort through my soul."

MRS. BROWNING.

"The Ministry of Song."

THERE is strong reason to believe that the Songs of "the sweet singer of Israel" were, in the main, composed in his earlier years, before he had reached the full strength of his manhood's prime, and whilst mind and heart and character were in the making.

There are songs of the shepherd life, fragrant with the balm-filled air of the pastoral solitudes of Bethlehem, resonant with the shocks of reverberating thunder, seamed with the fire of lightning flashes, and bright with the splendours of moon and stars; songs strong in the assertion of the divine possibilities of man, wholly joyous in their tone, free from the darkness of sin and the gloom of sorrow; songs, in fact, that must have taken poetic shape within the singer's spirit whilst he was "keeping those few sheep in the wilderness," "far from men and near to God," and rejoicing in his believing and bold speech to the Eternal Lord of the clear and far-stretching spaces of the Eastern sky.*

* *Cf* Psalms viii., xxiii., and xxix.

There are songs, too, that ebb and flow with the surging sorrows of the exile life, when, as a suspected and hated outlaw, though conscious of a king's destiny, he, separated from kith and kin, wandered about, hiding himself in dens and caves of the earth, a high-souled singer making melody in his heart to the Lord.*

There are also songs of the opening years of kingly rule, full of exalted feeling; rich in grateful recognition of the God whose name is above all naming and whose goodness is beyond all speech; songs instinct with high purpose and saintly resolve; glad and humble in the presence of the dawning glories of a newly-acquired dominion, and yet withal quiveringly sensitive to the urgent need of the continuous power and unfailing love of God, inasmuch as yesterday's victory has not wholly released his hand from the sword-hilt, nor banished all fear from his heart.†

But the throne once fairly won and the crown firmly fixed, the hands of the singer fill with royal cares, and there is not time to make the harp vocal with his genius and inspiring with his exuberant joy. Once the deeps of his soul are broken up by a volcanic outburst of passion, and an agonizing wail comes from the sin-tortured heart of the miserable man, who, alas! at fifty years of age has plunged headlong into the filthy sewers of sin; then, at about an interval of a year follows a subdued and tender strain, stealing over us like soft melodies in the stillness of a summer sunset as we sit by a river's edge, sung by the chastened spirit of the penitent, who, after the bitterness and pain of remorse has tasted that the Lord is gracious and long-

* *Cf* Psalms v., vi., vii., lxi., lxiii. and lxiv.
† *Cf* Psalms xvi., xviii., xxiv. and ci.

suffering, ready to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. Still later, and in those dark days of Absalom's cruel disloyalty, when that mistress Sorrow, who sends us all to school, forces his reluctant fingers once more to the almost forgotten lyre, he bursts forth in songs of renewed confidence in God and plaintive pleading for His all-availing mercy.*

With these few exceptions, the recorded songs of David bear unmistakable signs of the poet's youth. There is an absence of elaborate chiselling of figure and of phrase, of subdued and calculated emotion, and of cautious self-restraint. We feel the spontaneity and glow of youth, the bounding and irresistible fervours of full life, the swift and breathless movement of an unexhausted spirit, the burning passions of a fire-filled heart; and are startled by the rapidity with which figure follows figure like rain-drops in a storm; and shocked by the tremendous energy and daring with which he appeals to the righteous and all-judging God. The chief poet of the Hebrew Psalter is undoubtedly the young Shepherd and not the aged Ruler; the fugitive outcast battling for safety and position, and not the serenely victorious monarch swaying an unquestioned sceptre far and near.†

* *Cf* Psalms li., xxxii., iii., and iv.

† There is sufficient evidence for the conclusion stated above, yet it must not be forgotten that there is great difficulty in determining (1) the actual number of the Psalms David composed, and (2) the period of his life to which each Psalm refers. The traditional titles of the Psalter credit David with seventy-three compositions out of the one hundred and one, whose authors are specified. Of the rest that have names, Moses and Ethan are assigned one each, Solomon, two, Asaph and the Sons of Korah, a dozen each. Many persons accept the traditional superscriptions with unhesitating confidence and resent with indignation the ejection of David from a solitary verse. But Dr.

II. Now that fact is of too much importance to be forgotten in the study of the forces, human and divine, by which David worked out his personal salvation, and wrought his ministry for the world.

Every man's work has two sides; in part it is the flower of his life, the outward and separable result and reportable sign of his inward being, the register-mark of his capacity, and of his acquired powers; but it is in a far larger degree the seed as well as the flower, the creator of the coming man, the active agent in the further growth of his nature. The worker builds *himself* by his work, as

---

Maclaren, who certainly does not lack a strong conservatism in Biblical criticism, says, with a significant abundance of qualifying terms: "There seems to be about forty-five psalms which we may attribute with some confidence to David." *(The Life of David as reflected in his Psalms*, p. 13.)—Dr. Perowne, one of our chief English authorities, attributes *twenty* songs to David without any misgiving, viz:—iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, xvi. xviii, xix, xxiii, xxiv, xxviii, xxix, xxxii, li, lxi, lxiii, lxiv, ci, cx. *Twenty-eight* more are possibly David's, but the degrees of probability vary very much; in a few cases being somewhat strong, and in others so feeble as not to displace doubt *Twenty-five* bearing David's name he surrenders without any reservation. Judging from Cheyne's introduction and notes, David's share in the Psalter is even smaller than that allowed by Dr. Perowne. He says, after referring to the opinions of Ewald and Kuenen: "It is at any rate a great relief to realize that only a very small number of the Psalms can reasonably be ascribed to David, and that of those which remain, a large proportion are written either (like the complaints of Job) in the name of a representative righteous man, or of the pious Israel personified." Then, he applies this theory to the solution of the tough problem of the imprecatory Psalms—saying: "As long as they are interpreted of an individual Israelite they seem sadly inconsistent with the benevolent spirit of the finest parts of the Old Testament, if, however, they are spoken in the name of the nation, or at any rate of those with the most awakened consciences, the strong figures and intense feeling become intelligible."—(*The Book of Psalms*. Translated by the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., pp. xii-xiii.) But, however the question of the Authorship of the Hymns of the Psalter may be finally decided, it is probable that of those which give the strongest evidence of coming from the mind of David, by far the larger part of them belong to the earlier half of his life.

well as the edifice that is outside of him, and on which others look.

I say "in a far larger degree," but this depends first upon the *youth* or age of the man, and next upon the *inwardness* or outwardness of his work. The younger the man, the more plastic and receptive his nature, and the more retro-active his deeds; as the sapling bends where the matured tree is stiff, and as the more fresh and supple the dyer's hand, the more easily is it subdued to the stain of the stuff he works in.

But the dye that goes deepest, and stays longest, is that we produce within ourselves; and the work that makes the mind and heart, and fashions the man, is the work that is most inward, and of the soul; our eager scepticisms or battling faiths; our moody despairs or conquering hopes; our stolid content with what we are and have, or earnest stretching forward towards the ideal above us; our grovelling in the dirt of sensualism, or soaring upwards to the mounts of spiritual communion; our droning through life's opportunity, as though it were no more than a pleasure garden for the sense, or steadfast climb in all weathers, and under all skies, to the Highest and Best. As a man thinks and feels, wills and aspires, prays and sings *in his heart*, so is he, and so does he *become* more and more. The work that takes soul in doing makes soul in the doer. Looking to and hasting towards the things that are spiritual and eternal, we spiritualize our being, and make ourselves more and more partakers of the Divine nature.

Hence David could not have gone to a better school, or secured more effective training than it seems likely he found under Samuel, the first of the prophets, and the

father of the Divine Psalmody of Israel, and in the quickening society of Samuel's students of music and song,* where, awed by that "hymn of eternity," "the prayer of Moses, the man of God"; roused to patriotic fervour by that "grandest ode to liberty ever sung," the triumphant pæan of the victors at the Red Sea; fired with invincible heroism by the war ballads and bold and dashing lyrics of Deborah and the rest of the Judge-patriots of the tribes; he pursued his character-building activity, till he not only sang for himself, but so far surpassed his teachers as to become the finished pattern and type of the religious singer, and the sacred poet, not "of an age, but for all time." Great was the ministry of song in the making of David. It developed and expanded his religious nature, cleansed his vision of God and life, of duty and destiny, fortified his soul for painful responsibility and self-suppression, soothed him in his sorrows and misfortunes, nourished and multiplied his strength, aided in the satisfaction of his yearnings for the purest and noblest life, voiced his heart-broken penitence and his new-born peace and rest, consoled him in the presence of his enemies, and became the appropriate garment of his triumphant faith in the hour of death.

First of all then, and principally, David's life enforces the SPECIAL SERVICE OF SONG IN THE BUILDING UP OF RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

III. But whether David's psalms were composed early or late, everyone has seen that the majority of this sweet singer's effusions are the songs of a sufferer, who sings for the convincing reason that he must, if only to soothe his

* Geikie—*Hours with the Bible*, iii. 76.

perplexities, and calm the agitations of his soul. He does not make poetry "to order," as if he were a king's laureate, but to lift up his heart into the bracing atmosphere of truth, and the brighter air of a Divine revelation. He is no student of verse, spinning rhyming phrases in his brain, but a man tempted in all points, like as our Lord and his Lord was, and like as we are; and as Christ sung a hymn —out of this very hymn-book surely—before he went to Gethsemane, so David sings in the cave into which he is driven by the persecuting Saul. He is not a dweller in ease and luxury, enjoying a poet's fancies, and revelling in a poet's dreams, but a man surrounded by enemies who "oppress him" and "swallow him up," whose "tongues are swords," who are like "beasts waiting for their prey." Like a timid eagle he flies to the topmost crags of the mountains on the wings of song so that he may find safety. He is a living soul made for God, and athirst for Him, insatiably athirst, and, therefore, following hard after Him, so that he may touch the hem of His garment, or catch sight of His countenance. In vital contact with human sorrow and misery, his heart throbbing with life's pain, he realizes with more than the common vividness their character and meaning, and his soul thrills with grief, and glows with the emotion which expresses itself in song. The cry of anguish alternates with the shout of a faith that will not succumb. The dull thud of grief is followed swiftly by the shrill clarion note of battle with despair. The half stifled sob of sorrow has scarcely ceased, when we hear the arresting music of a free and unconstrained talk with God. Plaintive tones struck from his harp in his wanderings solace his spirit, and hope and joy sun themselves into a

larger life and power as his irrepressible genius goes forth in soaring song to the Eternal.

Adolphe Monod says: "The psalms are full of an unheard-of suffering. David there speaks incessantly of his troubles, of his maladies, of his innumerable enemies—as we read them we can hardly understand what he means." But this, surely, we may understand, that he has kinship with the poets of all ages, and of all lands, aye, and with the sincere and the faithful throughout all time. For the chief function of the singer is to soothe the troubled spirit of man, to face and interpret the reality of human suffering, to uplift the soul in its battle with wrong, to prepare the sons of men to kneel and pray and conquer in Gethsemane, and to finish their work upon the cross of self-sacrifice. True song is a solace. Real poetry must infuse new energy, and fill desponding hearts with faith and hope. No singer reaches his best till he sings in language that thrills and inspires the soul, the eternal gospel, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Christ," believe also in Duty, in Progress, in Heaven.

But for such a mission the singer must, like David, be a sufferer. It is the school of sorrow that makes poets. We cannot create joy in the heart of another without sympathy, and to give sympathy we must have needed consolation, and then in letters like Paul, or in Psalms like David, or in similes like Christ, we may comfort those who are troubled with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God. Is it not so? Does not Browning in *Ferishtah's Fancies*, give proof that he is convincing his own heart as he sings of the gravest problems of life, and inflames our souls with a purifying love, a steadfast patience,

and a resolute will? Was it not Tennyson's own sorrow over the loss of his dear friend that forced him into the dwellings of the dead with the feeble light of reason to show how dark they are till he rings in the Christ, Who is life, and light, and immortality? Could Lyte have sung, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave, and follow Thee," if his spirit had not been well-nigh crushed beneath the pressure of incessant pain, and the limitations of habitual weakness? Was it not when the cloud of insanity that brooded over Cowper was just leaving him that he sighed, "Oh! for a closer walk with God"; and did he not conceive that infinitely consoling message, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform," just after he had driven to the London docks to commit suicide, and found such a crowd there that he could not carry out his purpose? Was it not Milton's own blindness that put the matchless pathos and inimitable beauty into his address to the "Holy Light, offspring of heaven first-born"? Would the inspiring strain, "God is a refuge in distress" have leapt like a flame from the heart of Luther if he had not been in the furnace? Was it not during the tribulation and anguish of "the Thirty Years' War," that Protestant Germany created its splendid wealth in "hymns of high hope and holy joy"? Did not Rist say, "The dear Cross has pressed many songs out of me," and was it not in the hour of his greatest extremity that Paul Gerhardt shouted,

"Give to the winds Thy fears,
Hope, and be undismayed,
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears,
God shall lift up thy head."

In this, brothers and comrades, we are all akin to the

poets. Suffering is the common lot. We know the meaning of pain, and have been schooled by affliction, and we ought to put forth our experience in the best way that is possible to us; in clumsy and blundering prose rather than not at all, so that we may draw the agony-nail out of the quivering flesh of our fellow-sufferers, and pour in the healing balm of a Divine consolation.

Oh ! marvellous is the soothing, quickening energy of a message that comes straight from a loving *heart* ! At once it speeds to the *heart* that needs it as to its home and goal, and works its medicinal charm. Here is the secret of the unreportable ministry of David's song. Oh what solace ! How the thousands of toiling and suffering saints have drawn refreshing water from these wells of salvation ! Not the angels in heaven, not any historian on earth can tell the whole tale of their work ! It would require a book ten times the size of the Psalter itself to speak of the debt of "Asaph" and "the sons of Korah," Hosea and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Job, the exiles in Babylon, and the fighting and suffering Maccabees, Jesus and Paul, Athanasius and Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine, Basil and Cyril, Luther and Calvin, Herder and Ewald, Horne and Robertson ; and an unnamed host that no man can number, who, before the bench and behind the plough, up at the mast-head and down in the quarry, over the cradle and away in the camp, in the study or on 'change,' amongst the crowds of the city and in the solitudes of the prison, have drunk inspiration and gladness and joy from the imperishable hymns of the son of Jesse ! Thanks be unto God for the unutterable SOLACE OF RELIGIOUS SONG !

IV. Again, it is the unique sign of a Davidic Psalm, that it is always a real and bold communion with the living and loving personal God. At once, and without a moment's pause he is with Him—with Him even when he is "following hard after Him," like a swift-footed gazelle, afraid lest He should pass from his grasp, or miss His gracious appearing. "O God," says he, in the language of blended assurance and desire, of acute hunger and of real satisfaction, "O God, thou art *my* God, earnestly do I seek Thee. My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh pines for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." His being flames in every part with the love of Jehovah. In a free and unconfined stream the full waters of devout affection and adoring worship flow forth as he speaks to God with a daring frankness and a bold confidence absolutely original in the whole compass of Revelation. He tells God everything, his strong love of right and his bitter failure, his honest purpose and glaring sin, his wearing and wearying grief and his sudden jets of joy, his vehement protests, black doubts, unrepelled faith and importunate yearnings. Out of the stormiest seas he comes up towards the hills from whence cometh his help. Never does he climb out of the mire of the Slough of Despond on the side towards the City of Destruction, but always on the side nearest the Redeeming God and the Land of Beulah. He could as soon think his mother would have forsaken her moaning and suffering child, because it could not see in the dark, or hear her voice, or grasp her hand, as that God could go away from those that love Him, or neglect the heart that trusts Him. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me. Surely goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

This, friends, is the charm, the unequalled charm, the strength, the undying strength, of David's Psalms. His song is the living worship of the living personal God. Every poem is a sacrifice. Each line throbs with love. Every verse is a word to God. Each tone is as adoring as it is musical, and as spiritual as it is sincere. The singer mounts into the Divine presence, "beholds with unveiled face the glory of God, and is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The Psalms are full of God. God is in the law that came by Moses; but it is as in a bush all afire, and as we draw near we tremble, take off our shoes, veil our faces, and are filled with awe at the dazzling splendour of the Divine holiness, and terror-stricken by the thunders of the Divine power. Whereas the God of the Psalms is "our God," "my God," whom we rise early to seek, and whose personal presence is a living delight; our Rock and our High Tower, Whose strength is our defence; our Shepherd, Whose unfailing care stays our fear and quiets our alarm. A sense of personal ownership of, and positive union with Him, saves and renews and fills the soul.

God is in Biblical history, and in *all* history. Each page is luminous with His name, and each fact is eloquent of His loving purpose; but we linger over the historical details, are detained amongst human incidents, broken plans, half-realized aims, and never get quite free from the confusing presence of the imperfections of men. We

see through a glass darkly, and not face to face. But caught by the inspiration of David's song, we are swiftly wafted above earth and sense, enter on the path of life, and stand where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore.

God is in the loving letters of Paul and John, replete with wisdom, and strong in light; but we are tempted to stay at Rome with the prætorian guard, or at Philippi with Euodia and Syntyche, or at Ephesus with the elders, or at Corinth with the Jews in their intellectual warfare with the Apostle to the Gentiles; and indeed it is well that we should; but for communion with God and freeness of access to His love and grace, we take "the Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs," and with them cry out our penitence and sorrow, sing our increasing joy, gaze on His beautiful holiness, and set our nature at liberty for the fullest outpouring of affection, and the completest consecration in obedience. It is as if the winter were past and gone and the sun shone, and the soft winds blew, and the birds sang, and spring was here in all its gladdening brightness and life-giving wealth! No wonder the Book of Psalms is the only part detached from the Older Scripture by the instinct and sagacity of the Christian Church and bound up with the New Testament! No wonder it has gained so firm a hold on the heart of universal Christendom, and been accepted as its best treasure next to Him Who is the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Whom we ourselves are complete. THE AID OF BIBLICAL SONG IN COMMUNION WITH GOD IS THE HIGHEST CLAIM THE PSALTER HAS UPON THE GRATITUDE AND LOVE OF MAN.

V. Such, however, are the manifold fascinations and

various uses of the Psalter, that possibly as many minds are won and held by its *interpretation of life*, as by its help in fellowship with God.

Few of us, I believe, are able to take that side in the discussion as to the function of poetry which restricts its range to the mere criticism of life, the cold analysis of its elements, and the careful balancing of its powers. We want clear-sighted apprehension of life's meaning, and effective assistance in reaching its goal; and it is because we know we get this in the songs of David that our secret souls repeat his holy strains. David sees life as it is, and sees it wholly, what is above it, and around it, and beyond it, as well as what is in it; hears what it says, and reads what it means; for what it is given, and what can and ought to be done with it; what makes it poor, and weak, and miserable; and what alone can redeem it, and dedicate it to the noblest issues.

How divinely and helpfully he interprets man's world! It is his temple for worship, his school for study, his nursery for growth, his home with God. God pervades and fills it. He is not above it, touching it only at certain points; in the brilliant aurora, the volcanic rent, the startling comet, but He is all through it, making the heavens radiant with His brightness, the earth full of His goodness, and the sea crowded with His riches. *It* is not evil in itself though evil is on it. Rather is it God's Bible, scored over and over with sacred inscriptions; God's temple, peopled with a fine symbolism; God's robe, the garment in which the All-beautiful clothes Himself. Not on its scientific side as an appeal to the reason, or a problem for the analyzing chemist; not on its purely poetic side, a

message for the genius of Wordsworth, does he see nature; but always in its religious aspects, as a gospel for the emotions, a revelation of the power and goodness of God. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth," is the golden key with which he unlocks all the rooms of the vast palace of the universe, and goes through every door to find the King and touch His benignant sceptre.

The same genius, fired by the inspiration of God, pierces the thousandfold clouds that hide the real wealth of man from human sight, and daringly affirms in the eighth psalm, "Thou madest him little less than Divine, and didst crown him with glory and honour." Man is modelled after God, and visited by his Maker. His life has a deep and true sanctity. It is inviolable; and, sin and sorrow notwithstanding, human existence is good. Trivial events are lines in the Eternal plan, and the accidents of time partake of destiny. His place is high in the creation. Grand liberty dowers him, a keen sorrow and a swift judgment chasten him; and by faith and obedience to God he becomes the possessor of a life of holiness which is for ever. The true Jerusalem is here. Earth is heaven. Time is a fragment of eternity, and the presence and favour of God is all and in all. God's Anointed One is coming, and under His leadership evil will be fought and mastered, and all flesh will see the salvation of God.

It is our misfortune that poetry is not always high-toned, creative of reverence for truth, beauty, and goodness, and a minister to worth and righteousness. Sometimes, alas! it corrupts and enervates with debasing suggestions, dulls the conscience with the opiates of sense, relaxes the will with sickly langours and putrid imaginings, kills faith

with its despair, and pours falsehood into the soul along with delusive but pleasant airs. If, according to the old proverb, such "corruption of the best" gifts of God "is the worst" in its results to men, what may we expect of rich effect from the exaltation and purification of the "vision and faculty Divine" given in our Psalter! Verily we have stored up herein, ethical force of incalculable energy, and of immediate and easy availableness. Teaching and admonishing one another by these psalms, we warn from sin and allure to holiness, summon to the joys of repentance and the duties of aspiration, quicken the hate of wrong and love of right, rouse to active resistance against evil, and inspire sustained war for God and righteousness. The part played by the poets of God in the REVELATION of His character and our duty is second to no other in the whole Bible, not even to that of the chief prophets of Hebraism, or of the apostles of Christianity. Only the Son of God surpasses them.

VI. We often talk about proofs of Inspiration! Might we not intelligently rest our whole case on this ministry of Biblical Song? For when we have allowed for everything that sound criticism and wide research can give us, and reduced to the lowest possible minimum, consistent with actual fact, the differences between the Psalms of the Hebrews and the products of the same universal Spirit, in the poets of Assyria and India, of Greece and of Rome,* yet, judged only by the clear thought they create, the pure emotion they kindle, the love of right they inflame, the

* For "however short their flights, the Babylonian poets were no strangers to the regions of spiritual devotion."—*Cheyne*, ibid viii.

energy they infuse, the Psalter is positively unmatched in the whole literary expression of the world. By their breadth of thought, many-sided presentation of spiritual experience, their full sympathy with all that is human, and persistent preference of that which is best, their calm amidst social revolutions and fortitude in personal trials, their frank speech about life in all its changes and dominant reality, their bold refusal to despair and tenacious hold of God, they lift into the sunnier regions of thought, fire with faith and love, and raise man to the maximum of achievement. They have been an anchor of hope, both sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil of futurity, sustaining the patience and comforting the hearts of much-enduring men. Like fuel they have fed the fires of patriotism and devotion, of self-denial and magnanimity; constrained men to eject that despisal of the weak which is so natural to us, and to seek and save that which was lost and bring it to God. Like magnets, they have attracted to the acceptance of the highest Ideals and sustained the bravest, as they have forgotten what was behind and striven to reach the mark of the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. For centuries nations have sung their utterances and churches worshipped in their melodies, sorrowing with their lamentations, and rising with their joy and praise. The family has been sanctified by their purity, the weary refreshed by their sweetness, and the hopeless revived by their light. Sailors and sages, priests and ploughmen, merchants and mechanics, old and young, the living and the dying, have drunk from this perennial fount of the waters of everlasting life, and lived for evermore.

"Have been inspired," did I say? Is then its inspiring power exhausted? Has the ministry of the Psalter ceased? Is it no more than an interesting memorial, a splendid book-ruin, a richly-carved window in a Furness Abbey that no longer gives a home to the wayfarer and a shelter from the storms of life? Is the Bible an inspired futility? a sword that is useless against an actual foe, and only interesting in an archæological museum; a seed lineally descended from the wheat garnered by Joseph, but incapable of yielding a nourishing loaf for a hungry man?

No, a thousand times, no! It is a real worker in the burden and heat of the day, a livingly operative factor in the perpetual process of bringing God and all that is good to men, an organ through which we hear the clear and distinct tones of the Divine Voice, a channel for the increasing communications of the Spirit of God; a "means of grace," a middle-point, a medium, a mediator, through which the strength of God comes to us according to our day. Did Cromwell lead his soldiers to victory at Dunbar with the martial language of the 68th Psalm? Not less did the lately departed Monod soothe and strengthen his spirit in the long fight against a lingering and painful disease with this balm. Does Luther speak of the Psalms as "a garden with a wonderful variety of exquisite, hearty, and delightful flowers"? So the voice of Robertson was heard not long since speaking of them as "the most precious part of the Old Testament." Did Jeremy Taylor say he "was confident no affliction could come great enough to spend so great a stock of comfort as was laid up in the Psalter," and that "the comforts of David's Psalms were more than

sufficient to repair all the breaches of mankind"? A more recent sufferer, Frederic Ozanam, declares "I should be inconsolable for my weakness, if I did not find in the Psalms those cries of sorrow which David sends forth to God, and which God at last answers by sending him pardon and peace." If Archbishop Trench reminds us of the prisoner who felt that he was "borne up by the Psalter, as a lark perched between an eagle's wings is borne into the everlasting sunlight, till he saw the world and all its trouble for ever beneath him"; Maurice himself says, that "through the Psalms men have been convinced that the Divine Voice is never so truly and distinctly heard as when it speaks through human experience and sympathies."* And this very morning, of multitudes that no man can number, it is truly said:

"There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide,
Of th'everlasting chime.
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls these holy strains repeat."

VII. We have then an old Hymn Book, composed of the inspired products of the Hebrew Church for over 500 years, but though old, full of new and inexhaustible power!

And is this all? Are God's singers all dead, or does the

* *Cf* Trench.—Hulsean Lectures on *The Fitness of Holy Scripture for Unfolding the Spiritual Life of Men*, pp. 56-59.

succession live for ever? Has He no anointed poets now? Is the throne of David vacant?

Thanks be to the Eternal Father of men, our age is more abundant in its evidence of the presence of the God of the Psalter than any period in the world's history since David sang in Bethlehem! To us with our painfully prosaic life, our impatience and fretfulness, moral cowardice and fears, He has sent the singers of the everlasting gospel of His pardon and power, who drive away our spiritual lethargy, impart the joyous energy of faith, soothe our weariness, and lead us to the mountains of glad vicarious sacrifice, soul for soul. The Hymn Book of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century is one of the choicest gifts of God for the enriching of the life of man.

No tongue can tell the value of this treasure. I know at least three who were charmed into clinging confidence in the Redeemer through the trustful cry of Charlotte Elliot, "Just as I am, without one plea"; and there is one here now, who only recently started on a new life as we sang the words of W. J. Walker, "Jesus, I DO trust Thee, trust without a doubt, 'Whosoever cometh Thou will not cast out.'" Visiting the sick and dying I have had no better helper next to God's own Word than the songs of trust and hope in our *Union Hymnal*. Again and again have I witnessed the gentle access of a serene cheerfulness and a beautiful patience whilst reading to weary hearts the words of a patient sufferer—

> "When all outward comfort flies,
> And my heart within me dies,
> Hear, O hear my trembling sighs:
> Help me, O my Saviour!"

Or that dew-laden song of Whittier's—

"All as God wills, Who wisely heeds
To give or to withhold,
And knoweth more of all my needs
Than all my prayers have told!"

And what need I say more? To tell the full story of the work of Frances Ridley Havergal, Horatius Bonar, Cecil F. Alexander, Sarah Adams, F. W. Faber, J. D. Burns, T. H. Gill, W. W. How, T. T. Lynch, J. S. Monsell, George Rawson, and of the rest of the Christian singers of our time, is impossible. Their names remind us of our debt, and suggest the immense additions made to the song-stores of the Church since the days of Watts and the Wesleys, Doddridge and Cowper, Newton and Montgomery. Let us be grateful to God for them and their gifts, and since first thoughts colour the feeling of the whole day, possess ourselves in the early morning of some high and pure strain of song that shall abide with us through its changing hours, a solace and an inspiration, an education and a power.

"IT was the fashion of old, when an ox was led out for sacrifice to Jupiter, to chalk the dark spots and give the offering a false show of unblemished whiteness. Let us fling away the chalk, and boldly say,—the victim is spotted, but it is not, therefore, in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men's highest hopes."

GEORGE ELIOT.

"He was the ruin of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of time."

SHAKESPEARE.

"A mental and a bodily wound are alike in this, that after there is but the 'scar' of either left, bad weather will revive the torture." MACDONALD.

"The error of all is the reproach of none."

GRAVENHURST, 106.

David's Great Sin, and God's Greater Grace.

"And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.'
—2 *Samuel* xii. 7.

I. When Alexander, King of Macedon, and one of the few conquerors of the world, had his portrait taken, it is said, he sat with his face resting on his fingers, as though he were in a profound reverie, but really that he might hide from the observer's view an unsightly scar.

Our Bible always keeps the sitter's finger off the scars. It paints the full face with flawless detail—beauty and blotches, saintliness and scars, all, and in all. The face of Abraham, the friend of God, is still marred by the deep lines graven by the falsehoods told to Pharaoh in Egypt. No one looks at the countenance of Jacob without detecting the hunger for pelf that flashes from his crafty eye. Peter's denial of his Master is as ineradicable as the stain in Macbeth's conscience. Men and lads who know little

or nothing of the royalty of David's genius, the overflowing fulness of his strength, the burning intensity of his spirit, and the unprecedented finish of his self-effacement, prattle about his "great transgression" as though it were his only claim to remembrance, and "blaspheme the Name of the Lord" as though a great fault and a great soul could never exist together. His harp, from which he wrung matchless strains of pure penitence, tranquil trust, and helpful hope, is hung upon the willows in forgetfulness; but his hideous foulness rises up into view like a far up-jutting rock above the waves of a calm sea. His early subdual of his own spirit at Bethlehem is unknown, but his cruel debauchery floats across the serene sky of his life like a black cloud athwart the radiant heavens. Miserable souls that never rose an inch above the dead level of a monotonous propriety, utterly guiltless of all enthusiasm, and as incapable of original goodness as a bog of beauty, shake the head and heave the sigh over the princely spirit that ascends steadfastly to God through a long life-time, battles against ten thousand odds with a resolute spirit, and climbs the rugged and lonely heights of holiness with a divine defiance of evil; but in a bitter moment falls, as at one fell swoop, and still falls, till, wounded and bruised and crushed outright, he lies prostrate and bleeding at the very base of the mountains of goodness.

Nor was it likely to be otherwise; for the Hebrew historians have given David's portrait, taken on the spot, with unquivering fidelity to fact, without the omission of a single detail, and, as we say of our Academy pictures, "*hung it on the line*" of vision of the Biblical Portrait

Gallery, and in the very centre of the Davidic room, so that it arrests every visitor's attention, and holds it so irresistibly that it still haunts him with its gloom-filled shadows, and its seams of blazing fire. Whatever else he forgets about David, that abides!

II. But, after all, is it not a true human instinct and a healthy canon of art that puts the finger on the scars of the face? Why perpetuate the memorials of deformity? What need to recite the repulsive story of human wrong-doing? Is it not far saner, as our Emerson maintains, to sing the glories of the good, and sink the bad; to chant the praises of virtue, and cover vice with the mantle of concealment? Why should the artist dip his brush in undiluted ugliness, when so many pictures of finished beauty invite his skill? Surely it is no sign of force of intellect or kindliness of spirit to explore the warts on a face radiant with beneficent expression! Besides, may you not multiply iniquity by exhibiting it, palliate wrong by disclosing its riotous growths in men of exceptional holiness, and weaken the yielding spirit in combat with temptation by supplying excuses for self-indulgent failure, and elastic resistance to desired defeat? Above all, is it fair and just to King David himself—for the dead have their rights—to reduce the account of his numerous victories over adjacent foes to a few verses, to say so little about his gigantic and sustained efforts for the wise organization, establishment, and extension of his kingdom, to leave us in total darkness as to many points of his legislation; and be so prodigal of space in sketching the one glaring wickedness of a career of splendid purpose,

fine daring, and magnificent achievement, lived by a man whose spirit, in its aim and drift, was undeniably according to God's own heart? If the picture of David's moral collapse does not violate the laws of art, ought we not to impeach it in the name of justice? Do we not well to be angry?

All that depends first, upon the spirit in which the biographer conceives and carries out his design; and next, and mainly, upon the purpose which dominates every part of his painting.

You may tell a man's faults for the mean end of gratifying a prurient and debased curiosity; or to palliate and excuse a biting sense of personal wrong-doing; or to compel a low and despairing view of human life; or to give food to a jaundiced and self-condemned egotism that cannot sit still in the presence of greatness, but must, perforce pelt it with any discoverable stones, picked up with facile fingers out of any mud, by that envy which finds such hospitable entertainment in most of our minds.

But the Hebrew historian's account of David's great sin is at once lifted far away, and beyond the touch of all such criticism, by the strenuous and insistent moral purpose of the writer, by his clear consciousness that he is narrating a part of the real, though sad, history of the Kingdom of God; and so forcing a series of foul and atrocious crimes into the ranks of the preachers of righteousness, the beneficent angels of warning and rebuke, hope and courage; the trumpet-tongued heralds of human repentance and Divine forgiveness, perfected and crowned by merciful renewal and enlargement of soul.

For three thousand years that story in the book of

Samuel, and the two hymns incorporate with it in the book of Psalms,* has graven itself in men's lives, voiced the penitence of contrite souls, brightened the eyes of the despairing with the light of hope, soothed the sick and weary, and witnessed for truths which lie at the very root of human well-being and progress.

(1) It has set in the irrefutable logic of facts the truth, that increasing and incredible mischiefs follow the violation of the laws of social purity, in monarch as well as subject, in the high-placed as well as the lowly, in the children of genius and of goodness as well as in the offspring of sensualism and vice.

(2) It has proclaimed that woman is not a satanic bait for man's soul, but a minister to his purity and happiness, and that the saintliest men imperil their slowly built integrity, and fling into the depths of the sea the precious jewel of their character, if they fail to maintain an exalted conception of woman as woman, and pay to her individual soul the homage of a genuine reverence and an inflexible justice.

(3) In the lengthened tale of the consequences of this trespass, and the series of awful tragedies crowded into David's life from this fatal hour, it has revealed the essential falseness of the polygamous basis of family life, repeated the divine decree that true marriage is of soul with soul, and not of flesh with flesh, and that disaster sooner or later must come to the Home and the State of the people who fly in the face of that eternal rule.

(4) It is also a pathetic and powerful enforcement of the law discovered in the dawn of the world's life ;† that it is

* Psalms xxxii. and li. † Genesis iii. 9, 17, 18. Numbers xxxii. 23.

"impossible to hush up a solitary lapse." Sin finds us out, if only by dragging other sins in its train. David adds lying to lust; treachery to lying; and murder to all, and at the last, is all but drowned in the swine's trough of sensualism and iniquity.

(5) But the principal message of this chapter in the life of Israel's greatest hero, and that which fixes our thinking to-day is, that *David's great sin is met and mastered by God's greater grace.* "Where sin abounded, grace much more abounds." In the day of his fearful fall, and aggravated transgression, the heart of the all-pitiful Father throbs with grief; He is moved with compassion, and seeks to restore him to purity by repentance, and to peace by forgiveness. God makes him great not only by His "gentleness," but by His severity; not solely through his songs, but through his sins. Satan desired to have him, and got him, and sifted him, but God did not let him slip, nor his faith utterly fail; and after his conversion he sang songs which have comforted and strengthened his brethren for thirty centuries. "Create in me a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit, then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." God answered David's fervent prayer, and David fulfilled his missionary promise.

I have been told, again and again, that the first feeling awakened by the sight of Holman Hunt's last picture is one of confusion and bewilderment. Everything is vague. Objects are ill-defined. Chaos is king. But as you look with steadfast gaze from point to point of the extended canvas, the interest deepens and grows. The spirit of the artist breathes upon you. Dim and shadowy spectres are seen to be watchful and eager cherubs, and the haze-

enswathed forms come out full of life, and meaning, and beauty. You are filled and inspired with the ideas of the painter, and enriched and gladdened by fellowship with him in his work. So we, fired by the brilliant daring and firm strength of David's career, and filled with gratitude for his ministry of song, coming abruptly upon this picture of the king, fallen from all his greatness, are seized and controlled by a spasm of painful and indignant remonstrance; but, conquering that emotion, and guided by the Spirit of holiness, the dark back-ground of the prostrate and penitent monarch reveals to us more completely the beauty of the Redeeming God, and we share the king's keen vision of sin, throb with his penitence, and bend the knee in gratitude and adoration.

III. But after the best is said that can be said for these fruitful issues, effected by the dews and rains and sunshine of redemption, from such sorry seed by a wonder-working God, still the *sin itself* is so bad, so heinous, so despicable and aggravated, that it will not bear telling with any sort of patience and ordinary self-control. It makes one's blood boil that a man such as he, so strong and self-disciplined in his youth, heroic and magnanimous in his manhood, fervid and passionate and original in his love and worship of the Eternal, wide in his culture, and clear in his vision—that he, David, the poet, the prophet, the patriot, the soldier-king, the saint, at fifty, or maybe at fifty-eight years of age,* should slip back into such foul

* Ewald fixes the age of David at the time of this event at fifty, but Graetz calculates that he must have been at least fifty-eight years of age.

mire, and bedabble and bedraggle his soul through such diabolical vices! It fairly takes one's breath away! Why! he breaks nearly all the commands of God at once! He, a man and a father, forgets his duty to himself as a ruler, and permits the furious steeds of passion to ride rough-shod over all the sanctities of the home! He, a king, commits treason against a subject he is bound to protect! He, a soldier, once so sensitive that he would not touch the skirt of the king with his sword, pens a letter that takes the life of one of his most chivalrous comrades! He, the shepherd and leader of his people, lifted out of the sheepfold to the throne, to guide God's flock, plunges headlong into the lowest of villanies! Oh! "how are the mighty fallen!" David! David! hast thou forgotten thine ancestor Joseph and his heroic resistance to the tempter? Above all, hast thou forgotten God, the God of thy fathers, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Better for thee that Saul's javelin had pinned thy body to the wall in thy brave and pure youth, than that thou shouldst have soaked thy garments in this seething corruption, and soiled thy character with these irremovable stains!

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Undisturbed prosperity for a score years has relaxed the king's vigilance, shrivelled and shrunk his moral fibre, lulled his conscience to sleep, enervated his dedicated and disciplined will. "He has had no changes," and so has forgotten God and his vocation. Ease has made him effeminate. Luxury has generated idleness, for even now he is exposing himself to temptation by "tarrying at Jerusalem," when he should be at the "wars." Reiterated

excuses for slight neglects of duty, and satisfaction with a withered ideal, have prepared for this awful catastrophe.

It is not well for any of us to escape difficulty, combat, and criticism. We must not forget the perils of advancing years. Age has its dangers not less than youth. Necessity is a better servant to virtue than we usually imagine. Few of us can resist the seductions of ease and affluence, or conquer the fearful temptations born of having "nothing to do." A man should bear the yoke in his youth, and if he is wise he will not be in a hurry to put it off, but will die under its tightening grip. The true soldier aims to be *faithful unto death.* Age is no dispensation from watchfulness, and length of years no guarantee of safety. The oldest of us must watch and pray, lest we blunt the spiritual sensibility, become the prey of vulgar ambitions, and allow the cleansing fires of self-risking enthusiasms to die down and die out. If David falls after half-a-century's experience of God's mercy, who is safe?

But sad as all this is—and we make no apology whatever for David's sin; he does not; Nathan does not; and we will not say a word to mitigate the sentence of the most rigid tribunal before which the culprit can be brought—the most distressing and deadly feature of these revolting transgressions is not the plot to murder; the cold-blooded treachery; the gross lust; black and hideous as they are, but his callosity, his hardness of heart, his seeming supercilious consciousness of no sin. Think of it. For a whole year the guilty monarch lives on and on, face to face with the memorials of his sin; remorse mostly asleep; dull torpor occupying the contested throne of his heart: his bruised soul unrelieved by the

throes of a genuine repentance and a full confession. Surely the heart is deceitful above all things, and capable of desperate wickedness, and inexpugnable stolidity! Who can know it! Its self-delusions are unsearchable, and its devious diabolical ways past finding out! Never imagine there is no sin because there is no sharp pain, no wrong done because no sob of agony is heard, no neglect of duty because no pricking of conscience is felt, no loathsome or disgusting evil because all is fair and beautiful without! Rather pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way *in me*, and lead me in the way everlasting."

IV. But David's superficial apathy and coveted hardness cannot last. God will not let it. He will bring the evil to the light, and pierce the sinner's soul through and through with the two-edged sword of many sorrows, that He may cast out the deadly iniquity. The king's secret crime leaks out. That much decried Minister of Justice, "Gossip," passes along the bazaars, and on to the palace, and to the schools of the seers, until it startles and shocks the soul of the young prophet of God, Nathan. He cannot rest. The bitter tidings fill him with sorrow. The burden of the Lord is upon him. God's anointed must be rebuked, and his fearful doom declared. There can be no paltering with evil because it is done by a king, no truckling to wrong-doing because he who commits it has the power of life and death, no veiling a monstrous iniquity from sight because it is committed by one of exalted place and of exalted character. God and His prophets are no respectors of persons. They witness for stern justice and for rigid and inflexible law;

and the higher the rank of the sinner, the more urgent the swift exposure of his sin.

Away goes Nathan and obtains audience of the King. With a method that is faultless, a beauty that is unspeakable, and a boldness that never flinches, he rouses the conscience of the king, drugged by the fumes of his depravity, entraps him into an indignant denunciation of wrong in another—for the guiltiest of us are eager to pour out the vials of our wrath on others, though laden beyond reckoning with excuses for our own sins—then dissipates every self-concealing cloud by one short sharp electric flash—"*Thou art the man;*" but with no less rapidity lifts the sinner's thought to the kindness and mercy of God, to follow with a full recital of his iniquities, and a terrible forecast of that brood of curses coming, like chickens to roost, in his home and embitter the rest of his life.

Strange brain-book this of ours! It seems as though we wrote a page in our life, and then the wind of circumstance rose high and blew it over, and hid it from our sight, never again to be read by us or ours; but God comes by His prophet, His Nathan, His "gift" of Revelation, and His strong fingers open the sealed leaves and turn them back, and the blotted register is held before our startled eyes, and we are compelled to look straight on what we have written, until it seems as though the flashing light of God would burn it into our souls, and make us feel the horrible meanness and bald baseness of our low lives.

"Thou art the man," disturbs the sleeping conscience like a clap of thunder, and shakes the king out of the hollow passion in which he has lived since he solicited temptation by idleness, and yielded to it in spite of a protesting God.

The man is aghast at himself, utters no word in defence or palliation of his misdeeds, but leaps at a bound, right out of the slough of sin, and standing on its edge, confesses "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan met the full-hearted and almost voiceless penitence of the suffering man with the healing message, as full as it was brief, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

That penitence was no cheap and easy lip-cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It was the agony of an inexorably tortured soul; incensed against himself as one who had nourished a serpent in his heart, only that it might discharge its full venom upon him. Bitterly he cries and sobs out his grief, writhes and groans under the intolerable pressure of his sin, reels and staggers from the successive shocks of his anguish, his very bones wasting away amidst his moaning, his life-juices drying up through the burning fevers of his soul, his days wretched, his nights sleepless, his prayer, one moan; O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death.*

God creates such penitence for sin by Revelation. Sin does not of itself generate repentance. It warps the judgment, hardens the heart, distorts the vision, shrivels the the will, slays the man. It is not in sin to cure itself. Nor will penalties redeem and restore. Punishments do not of themselves beget soul-agony for sin as sin—for sins of the thought and the imagination, the will and the affections. George Eliot says in *Daniel Deronda:* "Lives are enlarged in different ways. I daresay some would never get their eyes opened if it were not for a violent shock from

* Psalms xxxii. 3, 4, 5.

the consequences of their own actions." Thank God that does happen sometimes, but human story tells us they are extremely few who are chastened and enriched merely by suffering the penalties of their own wrong-doing. Such issues beget despair, and lead a Judas to suicide ; but *alone*, they rarely, if ever, lead to life. They may accumulate self-reproach, discover the blundering stupidity of all sin, sour and embitter the temper, and crush and grind the man to powder ; but it is God in His prophets Who begets a divinely cleansing repentance, a fierce and pure hatred of wrong as wrong, and a renewed dedication to goodness and righteousness. God was in Nathan, convicting him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, reconciling him to Himself, with the promise that his sin is freely and frankly pardoned, and his restoration to Himself complete. It is God's mercy in the prophet that inspires the petition, "Have mercy upon me, O God! *According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies*, blot out my transgressions." It always takes a gospel to make a penitent. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." The vision of divine love breaks the hardest heart. The infinite pathos of the Cross touches the spirit with softer power for contrition and for comfort, than the song of the angels at Bethlehem.

How often I hear the lament, "O that I could feel a fuller grief for sin, a keener penitence, a bitterer self-loathing! I want the baptism of repentance!" Ah! brothers, this cannot be had by assessing the hurt that sin does to us, or by tracking its mischievous effects on others, or by threats of far-off doom ; we must see our sin in the clear light of the divine love and purity, in the presence of

His overflowing compassion, His undefeated pity, His suffering and all-enduring sorrow for our sakes. We cannot even see the full significance of the message, "Thou art the man," unless it is set in the centre of the healing radiance of our Father's forgiving love.

V. God quickens and enlarges a thorough repentance with His free and instant forgiveness, and crowns it with swift peace, soul enlargement, and hallowed progress. "A broken and a contrite spirit" is His most coveted home, and the souls of the penitent have been His chosen dwelling-place in all generations. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"; then how glad and full and deep the delight, when the heart of a David sobs with grief over his sin; the long estrangement from God is ended, and the right spirit is once more supreme!

"The Lord hath also put away thy sin." No libation is poured out, no temple service is performed, no bullock is slaughtered in propitiation, no ritual is observed; but, as in the parable of the prodigal son, there is the free outflow of the infinite mercy and love of God to the contrite and trustful soul. His iniquity is covered; his sin is forgiven; his rebellion is subdued; his crookedness is made straight; his evil is forsaken; his heart is made clean; the spirit of holiness has returned to him, and he rejoices in and sings of God's salvation, "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*"

But note, although God forgives the sin, He does not remit the penalty. He cannot. Infinite in power and resistless in will, He does not, He cannot cut off, at once

and for ever, the issues of David's iniquities. Wrong has an indestructible vitality, and a prodigious reproductiveness independently of him who did it. Most appalling is this tragic feature of our mysterious life! Never is that penalty lifted wholly out of David's career. It dogs him to the very end. It is there in the death of Bathsheba's child. It is there in the thickening plots of the palace; in the crime of Ammon; in the revolt of Absalom; and in the wickedness of his children. It is there in the air of the court laden with his infecting impurity; there in the "whips" to scourge him, made of the knotted cords of his "pleasant vices." But, notwithstanding the penalties live on with him and after him, as God's prophet says, the sin is forgiven, the resistance to God goes, and reconciliation takes its place; the love of evil is expelled by a passionate craving for purity; remorse gives way to peace. That was what he wanted, and what he got. It is from *sin* David desires to be saved. "Blot out my transgressions; wash me throughly from mine iniquity." Get rid of it altogether, and for ever. Make me clean. Purge me with hyssop, wash me, bathe me, make me "whiter than snow." Not a word about penalties escapes his lips! Sin is the bitter and hateful thing. It is from that he craves and struggles and trusts and hopes to be free at any risk, and at all cost. And God, Who is rich in mercy, does it. "He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." No human spirit can cry to God for help in the fight against evil in vain. He delights in mercy. He waits and works and rules to forgive.

VI. But forgiveness is not all David seeks; nor is it all he obtains. The greater grace of God triumphs over the great sin of David in making it contributive to his spiritual enlargement, the clearing and expansion of his conceptions of sin, of responsibility, of personality, of God, and of holiness. He recovers his original attitude of sincerity and simplicity, of uprightness of purpose, and of straight and stedfast vision; and from his own failure gains the clearest expressions of personal and individual sin the Bible contains. His sin accentuates his sense of personality in God and in self. "Against THEE, *Thee only*, have *I* sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." The emergence of the individual in total separation from the national, dates from these sharp and pain-filled experiences. David's passionate sense of the infinite, aided by his definite feeling of his personal responsibility for all his sin, gives to his ideas of God a simple freshness and vigour, directness and originality, unsurpassed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and imparts to his love of God a chastened humility and a sweet pathos, that render his songs the solace and inspiration of hearts bruised by sin and sighing for purity, in all ages of the world.

Let us adore the grace of God that carries on the upbuilding of men, not alone by shepherds' tasks and patriots' perils, courtiers' duties and singers' psalms, but also, and surprisingly by *the ministry of sin*, converting failures in human purpose and foibles in human lives, into goads and beacons, and transmuting even the victories of low animalism and blinding sense into whips and thongs driving the offending Adam out of the swine's field and into the pastures of the flock of God. The fact is as undeniable as it is glorious. The poet Longfellow sings—

"Saint Augustine! well hast thou said
That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
Beneath our feet each deed of shame.

All common things—each day's events
That with the day begin and end;
Our pleasures and our discontents;
Are rounds by which we may ascend.

The low desire—the base design
That makes another's virtue less;
The revel of the giddy wine,
And all occasions of excess.

All these must first be trampled down
Beneath our feet, if we would gain
In the bright field of fair renown
The right of eminent domain.

Nor deem the irrevocable Past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If rising on its *wrecks*, at last
To something nobler we attain."

Speaking to M. de Lesseps on the occasion of his admission to the Academy, M. Renan said: "You have that supreme gift that, like faith, works miracles. And the reason of your ascendency is this—that men see in you a heart that sympathizes with all that is human, and a veritable passion for ameliorating the lot of all mankind. They find in you that pity for the multitude which is the mainspring in all men of great practical talent. . . You are a master of the supreme art which consists in

knowing how to do good with evil, and get the great out of the little."

And is it not also one of the chief problems of science to convert the waste products of the world into the service of mankind? Has not chemistry, within the last thirty years, coaxed a whole world of beautiful colours out of the refuse of coal-tar?

But in all this, man is only the imitator of Him Who makes the wrath of men to praise Him, creates prodigies of self-abnegation and devotion to the spiritual well-being of the world, out of selfish, sensual, earthly, and devilish men; transmutes evil into good, and compels sin itself to supply the stairs by which the soul climbs nearer to God. As it is man's advance beyond, and elevation by, the faculties of reason and conscience, that lifts what is only natural evil in a brute-beast into the realm of moral evil in humanity, so under the redeeming discipline of God, that sin, which is a sign of advancement and prophecy of infinite possibilities of good, becomes an aid to clearer conceptions of God Himself, of man's place and function on the earth, and a goad and spur to intellectual, moral, and spiritual progress.*

Rejoice, repenting, trustful and eager soul, for the grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, redeeming and triumphing over sin.

* This view of sin, so signally illustrated in the career of David, must be held in conjunction with the doctrine that "sin does not, and cannot cure itself." Pain is a sign of disease, and a summons to medical examination and treatment of a diseased organ. Pain does not do the work of the physician, but it aids him, and the patient as well, in the combat with disease. We have no difficulty in recognizing the service of *other people's* sins and sufferings to us. We profit by their mistakes, and are warned by their follies. James Hinton says, "It is by the failure of some that others succeed, and

VII. "He saveth to the uttermost." Limit, there is none to His forgiveness. Barrier does not exist to His conquering grace. David is the Saul of Tarsus of the Hebrew Church. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that turn to Him with a broken and contrite heart, showing mercy to the penitent, be they never so guilty; and saving David, that in him as chief, God might show forth His long-suffering for an ensample to them that

---

through my very foolishness there shall come, perhaps, a better success to others; perhaps more than any cleverness or wisdom of mine could have wrought." Broadening the application of this principle, Ellen Watson writes in her life (185), "Evil is seen issuing in good through an unbroken series of progressive changes." Tennyson has in familiar lines affirmed this doctrine in relation to ourselves—

> "I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

The author of *Gravenhurst, or Thoughts on Good and Evil*, says, "Do not ask for a world without evil. Seek rather to know and rightly appreciate this our own dark-bright existence, and enter heart and soul into the warfare for the good.....From this contest we gain our felicity and our progress, and the contest itself is a great and enduring happiness, which runs through all the ages of mankind. All that is energetic and noble savours of this contest. Aye, even what is tenderest in human life comes out of some struggle between good and evil. Even our very piety springs from it." (pp. 16, 17.)

But to this we need to add the saying of Rousseau—"Inquire no longer, man, who is the author of evil; behold him in yourself. Take away everything that is the work of man, and all the rest is good." To the same effect is the utterance of Carlyle—"Always there is a black spot in our sunshine; it is even as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*." Sin is a contradiction of God's will. "This idea is stamped on every page of the Old Testament, and no concrete figures of prophetic rhetoric can be allowed to efface so clear and deep an impression." (*Christian Doctrine of Sin*, p. 97., Tulloch.) "Sin is nothing else than that the creature willeth otherwise than God willeth, and contrary to him. Therefore put off thine own will, and there will be no hell." (*Theologia Germanica, circa* A.D. 1350.) The sin is man's; his wholly and only; but God's greater grace forgives, conquers, and subdues to vast uses man's great sins.

should hereafter believe on Him to eternal life. Let no man despair. God saves to the uttermost sin—saves from sin, the one chief, and only real evil, from the worst and most disastrous of all sins, alienation from the Supreme Goodness, antagonism in heart and will to the Source of all Perfection. See, despondent soul, see this cruel voluptuary, soaked through with his debauchery, yet pleading for pardon and purity, and obtaining both ; asking to share the holiness of God and actually doing it. You cannot trust God's love too much. He delights in mercy. He forgives sin. He helps to bear the penalty. His love sets the crooked straight, gives rest to the weary, lightens the load of the care-worn, and gives new joy to the sad. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. Come then, defeated son of man, hope in Him, He will forgive, He will save. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"IN the secret of His presence
I am kept from strife of tongues;
His pavilion is around me,
And within are ceaseless songs!
Stormy winds, His word fulfilling,
Beat without, but cannot harm,
For the Master's voice is stilling
Storm and tempest to a calm.

"In the secret of His presence
All the darkness disappears;
For a Sun that knows no setting
Throws a rainbow on my tears.
So the day grows ever lighter,
Broadening to the perfect noon;
So the way grows ever brighter,
Heaven is coming, near and soon.

"In the secret of His presence
Nevermore can foes alarm;
In the shadow of the highest,
I can meet them with a psalm;
For the strong Pavilion hides me—
Turns their fiery darts aside,
And I know, whate'er betide me,
I shall live, because He died.

"In the secret of His presence
In a sweet, unbroken rest:
Pleasures, joys, in glorious fulness,
Making earth like Eden blest;
So my peace grows deep and deeper,
Widening as it nears the sea,
For my Saviour is my Keeper,
Keeping mine and keeping me!

"In the secret of His presence
Jesus keeps, I know not how;
In the shadow of the Highest,
I am resting, hiding now."

A One-Man Ministry.

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to My word."—1 *Kings* xvii. 1.

I. There is no finer witness to the marvellous "spirit" and quenchless "power" of the prophet Elijah than the fact, that the impression he made upon his contemporaries retained its clearness, and shone as a star of hope on Jewish thought and life, after the long period of nearly nine hundred years.

So potent was the original energy of his soul, that even in the days of our Lord, the story of the doings of the Tishbite was accepted and quoted as a familiar word-painting of the sacred courage, fiery passion, and redeeming aims of the Pioneer of the Anointed of the Lord; and held aloft as the supreme example of the attributes of the harbinger of a new era in the political and religious life of the people of God.*

* Luke i. 17., John i. 21., Matt. xvi. 14.

That he was a man of like passions with ourselves; became tired of life as we do, and at least once wished he had done with it, as we may have; and was the victim of a tormenting despair, as some of us are, was never forgotten; but he was so bold an assailant of bad men in high places, so intrepid an advocate of the truth of God, and so insistent and victorious in his supplications, that the last of the prophets saw in his annals a full programme of the work of the forerunner of the Messiah, and undertook to say that when a man appeared clad with his strength, breathing his courage, and incarnating his spirit, the kingdom of God was at the doors;—a prediction which Christ Himself accepted in express terms, and applied in detail to John the Baptist.*

Surely no more eloquent testimony could be borne to the Titanic strength of the man, or the enduring success of his prophetic mission.

II. Nor was this incalculable influence due in any degree to the creative fancy of an age, suffering from the deliriums of oppression, hungering for conquering heroes, and impatient to see its Redeemer. It grew out of the actual man; out of deeds of immense vigour and of boundless impetuosity—deeds, we may well believe, of even greater destructiveness and wilder energy than those reported in the First Book of Israel's Kings.† Elijah is a mighty man of valour—one of the heroes of God. No foe alarms him. No terror shakes him. When he stands on the

* Malachi iv. 5, 6.; James v. 17.; *Cf. Ecclesiasticus*, by Jesus, the Son of Sirach, xlviii. 1-11.; 1 *Maccabees* ii. 58.

† Ewald's *History of Israel*, Vol. iv. 66, *et seq.*

edge of the extremest hazard, he feels the most thrilling fascination ; and if he fail at all, as fail he will, it is after a gigantic success. His "word is with power," his sentences an instant doom, his sarcasm a scorching flame, his grim humour a piercing sword. If "Luther's words were half battles," Elijah's are whole ones, and still carry the force of an unspent ball. And yet, like most men of courage, he lost little time in speech, but was direct and immediate in his deed, leaping on to the field of action like a thunderbolt out of the sky ; and once here and at work, as resistless as a cyclone—not even one of the four hundred priests daring to lift up a finger against his order for their execution. He prays fervently, comes and goes mysteriously, and always fights disastrously against the foes of God and purity. Supreme "power" is his chief quality ; "spirit," dash, flaming zeal, his very self, his main weapon, his true significance, and his eternal merit. So entirely was his soul swayed by its immense energies, that it required a three-fold revelation to convince him (of a truth *we* have not yet fully learnt) that the kingdom of heaven is advanced more rapidly and surely by "the still, small voice" of persuasive love and heroic meekness, than by the sword of the executioner, the fire of passion, and the earthquake of human violence.

Still, do not mistake me. I do not mean to say that power for combat was the only facet of the many-sided nature of the Tishbite prophet. By no means. Other sides of his being, yielding a softer and more genial ray, are turned to the light by the historian. His ministry was not lacking in tearful pathos and sweet pity, as the scenes in the house of the widow of Zarephath beautifully

show; nor was his work mainly destructive of evil, for it is provable that he lifted "the schools of the prophets" into fresh life, exerted a long and growing influence in the revival of prophetism as a "College Tutor," and left, in the serene spirit of his successor, Elisha, the son of Shaphat, living testimonies to the sunnier aspects of his character, and the gentler phases of his work.

But this admitted to the full; it remains undeniable that Elijah owes his place in the annals of the Old Testament, and in the progress of the Kingdom of God to his character as a bold and fearless fighter for truth, a stern and unrelenting foe of established error, an astoundingly strong and invincibly heroic Prophet-Reformer. Abraham lives through the ages as the head and founder of a *new* people, Moses as the creator of *new* institutions, Samuel as the originator of the *new* school of the prophets, David as the pattern and exponent of a *new form* of Revelation; but Elijah, who created nothing, originated nothing, lives on as the embodiment of irrepressible spirit and power, sweeping down on his age as from the cloud-filled sky, and going crushing and crashing through the polluting idolatries of Israel like a thunderstorm through a forest. He is the John Wycliffe of his day, searching out the corruptions and abuses of religion, dragging them to the light, setting fire to them and their supporters, and sending his "preaching friars" from village to village and town to town, as the heralds of a pure religion, and the messengers of a healthy worship. He is the Martin Luther, defiantly proclaiming the theses of Mosaism in the very presence of the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth, and challenging them to immediate encounter. He is the John Knox terrifying crowned heads

by his prayers and words, more than the appearing of ten thousand armed men. Not more surely is "electricity" the key-word of our century, than spiritual energy the key-word to the place and function of the prophet Elijah.

III. But some of you are perhaps eager to blame Elijah for his unrelenting severity, and question the salutary uses of these fighting prophets in the complex life of the world. You arraign him as an intolerant persecutor, and denounce, not his courage, for that you admire, but the modes in which he clothes his great strength.

Stay! Remember that true courage has a quick eye as well as a strong will, is self-possessed when most impressed, moves by the impulses of the judgment as well as of the heart, and if it fights at all, fights with that full sense of power, which is born of the conviction, that right has an indefeasible authority to battle against and destroy all wrong. Elijah is a seer as well as a soldier; nay more, he is a soldier because he is a seer. He knows his age and its immediate and deepest want, and like a brave surgeon, thrusts in the knife, and cuts out the spreading cancer, that he may save the life of the State. Israel is a ruin in the midst of ruins. The glory of the days of David is departed and the pure and health-giving Hebrew religion is banned, to make room for the debauching superstitious and licentious orgies of Baal, and the worship of brute power. Dragged down from the sunlit heights of devotion to the one Living and Holy God, to which the poet-king had conducted them, the Ten Tribes wallowed in the mire and filth of a polluting idolatry. God's altars are thrown down. God's laws are broken God's prophets are persecuted and

destroyed. Unsatisfied with the enormous evil he has done in repeating the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, Ahab has married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Sidonians, a woman without conscience, and with immense strength, utterly unscrupulous and bitterly antagonistic to Hebraism, the Lady Macbeth of Hebrew history; and that marriage has fed the vileness and extended the influence of the heathenish worship. This, indeed is a day for judgment; and if there be a man of spiritual insight and power in the land; how can he use it, but as a warrior! As you cannot cut diamonds with soap, or hew down old oaks with a penknife, so you cannot suppress such evils as these with a coward's whisper. If Elijah is a prophet at all in Ahab's days, he must fight the good fight of faith, and slash to right and left of him with the sword of the Spirit. It is the only way by which Israel can get any chance of repentance, and of the renewal of its spiritual life; for if Ahab is not defeated, and the priests of Baal and Jezebel are not cut off, the Ten Tribes will go to swift destruction. The measure is drastic, but it is defensible, as some few wars have been, on the principle of being necessary to preserve the purity and integrity of the life of Israel.

It is one of the charms of power that it is so diverse in its manifestations, and we love to trace the spirit of courage because it clothes itself in such a variety of forms. It thinks in the scholar, sings in the poet, paints in the artist, preaches in the prophet, fights in the soldier, legislates in the statesman, rebukes in the reformer, and pulls down and builds up in the men who build the ages. It is gentle and genial, silent and strong, as the unperceived forces of the Spring changing the face of the earth

this morning ; and again it is noisy and desolating as a raging ice-storm. Soft and still it moves like dew amongst fragrant bloom, and along the spear-like blades of grass ; violent and surprising it dashes forward with the swiftness of an earthquake, and the destructiveness of streams of burning lava. In aged John it speaks with tones of winning entreaty, and from the serenity of a masterly calm ; in Paul it faces the "lion" Nero on his throne, and dares death with a victor's smile. It is retiring as a violet in a hedge-bank in Melanchthon, and in Martin Luther it is as bold and obtrusive as a sun-flower. In Leighton it is sweet and placid and persuasive ; in bold Hugh Latimer it speaks as fearlessly to king and statesman as to peasant and labourer. Life, in fact, requires many states of temper, phases of character, and moods of mind. There is a time for patient suffering, and a time for bold strokes ; a time for peace-making persuasion, and a time for defiant attack ; a time for the cleansing fires of a flaming Elijah, and a time for the softness and sweetness of an Elisha. He is a true seer who fits his work to the need of his day and place, makes his courage mount with the occasion, and uses sword or seed-basket as opportunity serves. It is not *all* combat for any of us, but at some point or other combat is inevitable if we are true and earnest. Fearful evils are rife. Trade needs the rectifying and cleansing spirit of Christ. Social wrongs call loudly for the warriors of righteousness. Intemperance eats as doth a canker. Luxury enervates the Church. Tradition and prejudice dim the clear shining of truth. The severe and strenuous spirit of an Elijah is still wanted on a hundred fields. God still says, "Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers."

IV. What then, we ask, in the presence of this necessity, are the sources of this clear-seeing and victory-winning courage? Whence do the Prophets of God derive their combative power?

One bright, brief sentence, solemn as an oath, solitary as an obelisk in a desert, and luminous as an apocalypse, tells all. Like a flash of light on a wide landscape, so this sudden outleap of the burning fires of Elijah's zeal shows the mysterious depths of his inward being, and lays bare the omnipotence that sleeps there. Coming up, as it were, out of an abyss, the weird wizard-like prophet confronts the King in his chariot with the doom-filled message, "As Jehovah the God of Israel liveth, before whom"—not before thee, O King!—"before whom I stand," and from whose immediate presence I come as His messenger and representative, charged to work His will, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word."

Who can seize the full significance of that electric message? Who can measure the emotion that throbs and palpitates in the speaker's heart as he hurls this fiery bolt at the head of the God-defying monarch, and meets his denial of the living God of Israel with the unquivering assertion that He is the real God, the actual worker in the life of His people, the source of all prosperity, the fighter for truth and righteousness against all the folly and license and lust of which this usurping King is the guilty patron! What a tremendous plunge he takes! What daring! What certitude! How enormous the claim the man makes for himself! How sure he must be of his ground! How his consciousness is filled and mastered,

swayed and possessed by the Divine! God is the Supreme Reality to him, and His action swift, immediate, and irresistible. God is not a guess, not a wish, not a fancy; but the living, personal, working Jehovah; more real than the broad and palpable earth; nearer to his spirit than proud Ahab; more clearly visible than the eight hundred and fifty priests; the most immediate, the most actual, and the most operative of all presences; the one full and ever-flowing fount of his exhaustless strength, and of his prodigious intrepidity. Empowered by the sight of the face of God he fights as one who never feared the face of man.

War against evil without God is weakness and defeat; with Him it is strength and success. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith in the living God, in whose immediate presence we stand and speak and work. Why! even the face of a friend will fire us with a noble scorn of meanness, and whet our ambition for excellence! How much more shall the face of God make us equal on the instant to the problem before us, inspire us with that fear of cowardice which expels all fear of men, and lift us into that fellowship with the Unseen and Eternal which impels against ungodliness with the energy that brings its strongholds to the ground. Jeremy Taylor in his "Holy Living and Dying," specifies, (1) the care of our time; (2) purity of intention; and (3) the practice of the presence of God as the chief instruments of holy living. Elijah found, as indeed we all may, that the third includes the first and the second, and much and even all besides, for to him who has a vivid realization of the Eternal God, time will be precious above rubies, sincerity of aim as easy as breathing the warm morning air to the

healthy; warfare for truth and purity as instinctive as the start from sudden danger; and courage as natural as daring in the soldier. It is an unimpeachable logic which sings, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident."

V. Short as this prophetic message is, and swiftly as it is uttered, it contains more than the declaration of an *all-pervading sense of the personal activity of Israel's God.* Elijah speaks as a man irrefutably convinced that he has a divine commission to share that activity, unquestionable authority to engage in combat with the evils of his age, and to fight for the immediate restoration of the pure religion of his fathers. The living God, "before whom he stands," constitutes him His representative and ambassador, charged with full power to speak and act. Necessity is laid upon him. He *must* go to Ahab, though he go alone. He must fight, though he stand solitary against the whole confederated error of the time. The fire of heavenly conviction burns within him, the sharp iron of responsibility goads him, the strong magnetism of duty allures him, and he is weary with forbearing, and cannot stay. At once, therefore, he crosses the Rubicon of action, with no Bible to back him, no friend to vouch for him, no herald to announce him, no companion to soothe him; his sense of a *Divine vocation* enough to convert the presence of God into power, conviction into act, duty into deed, thought into delivered message. God is all, and

God is enough. Elijah's courage has its source in Him—in the *fact* of His presence, and in the *idea* of His commission; and so God, duty, and the prophet are one and indivisible, and the solitary man of God is an overmatch for all Israel.

"Enough for him," and enough for us, if we only know how to avail ourselves of His everlasting strength, to get into the secret of His presence, to dwell under His shadow, and draw our courage from His resources We live at the very centre and in the home of power. All things are provided that pertain to the godliest life, the fiercest battling for right and good, the painfullest crucifixion of self, and the most perilous tasks. As steam only waited till Watt could find it and use it, electricity for the question to be put in true terms by Galvani, the message to cross the seas for Cyrus Field to prepare the machine in which it might ride; so our spiritual world, *filled with all the fulness of God*, waits our true insight, ardent consecration, vital faith, and adventurous zeal, and we discover points of untold power flowing in us and around us, rendering us instantly adequate in method and means for all the work the living God gives us to do. Daniel Webster was once asked "what was the most important thought he ever had." After a moment's deliberation he said, with a hush of deep solemnity, "the sense of my personal responsibility to God." I have seen a little fellow, barely four years old, start back from a deed merely because he was told it was "babyish." The idea was a goad in his spirit. It pricked his feeble will into exertion; light was converted into heat, heat into will-power, and the power of the will into self-resisting energy.

Ideas are springs of force; and of all ideas that of GOD is first and chief; and the next unto it, is that of a PERSONAL VOCATION. Feel that strongly and heroism is born. Give it free scope, and obstacles are overcome. Make it the ruler of your thinking, and you become real, true, daring, invincible. Son of man, you are in the presence of the living God: He has given you *your own work*. Know it. Get at it. Accomplish it as one assured that woe is unto you, if you do not finish your task, and preach *that* gospel to your age which God Himself has committed to your trust.

VI. For the presence and call of God are the surest guarantees of success, even to a solitary combatant offering resistance to the errors and vices of a whole age, and a whole people led and inspired by a corrupt King and Queen, and a corrupting priesthood. This is the Gospel of Elijah's life; the marvellous power of "A ONE-MAN MINISTRY." What prodigies a single-handed individual, feeble in himself in many ways, may achieve, when he draws his power straight from God, moves forward at His bidding, with His truth in the heart, and His glory as his goal! He may stem the tide of irreligion for a century, create a new epoch, and regenerate an age!

See these warriors as they enter the arena! Estimate their chances!

Here comes the mysterious prophet, tall, lithe of limb, fierce in aspect, clad in a sheepskin, girt about the loins with a leathern belt, his flowing locks reaching far down his back, without any weapon save his fiery word, which burns

like a lamp,* without any resource save the invisible God, without any ally save the truth and power of a divine religion!

He, single-handed, swordless, comes up against Ahab; a King in position and in power, not wanting in warlike blood, or "temperamental courage," famed for his personal prowess, victor of Benhadad, and like Napoleon III. devoted to art and commerce and to the improvement of the material welfare of the cities of his dominion!

With Ahab, comes Jezebel his wife, endowed with ten times his strength of intellect and fierceness of passion, and so insensible to moral considerations, that she can carry out her cruel designs without check from conscience, and with all the fervours of religion. The throne is supported by a vast military despotism, a wily and astute priesthood; and a people corrupted and debauched by nearly a hundred years' repudiation of the Lord God of Israel, and growing acceptance of a foul and debasing superstition.

It is a fierce fight: prophet against King; one prophet against King and Queen, soldiers and priests—a lone man of the desert, fired with zeal for the religion of Moses, against the heathenism that has been increasing in strength and fascination over the people for a century; truth, naked and unadorned, without a church, and with only one preacher, against falsehood, patronised by the State, endorsed and supported by "Society," embodied in a priestly caste, and deriving fabulous strength from the revolting iniquities of the people!

Dare any one foretell victory for the prophet! How can

* The Son of Sirach: *Ecclesiasticus* xlviii. 1.

he win against such odds ; even though there be a preternatural tension in his speech, and a terrific focussing of his powers in one single act of will !

And yet Elijah's victory is our solace ! The one man turns the tide in favour of the true religion, forces Ahab to cease the persecution of the prophets, stops his active interference with the Hebrew worship, quickens religious life throughout the nation ; spurs into existence the Rechabites, a body of men who devoted themselves to an austere life, so that they might more willingly serve God and their generation ;* imparts an impulse to prophetic activity which does not spend itself for more than a century ; prepares the way for his successor, Elisha, and so gives the ten Tribes an opportunity of returning to the living God, and warding off the terrible doom they have invited by their increasing iniquities.

Thus one man made an epoch ; one man with God in him and with him proved himself "multitudinous above all human majorities ;" a source of courage to hundreds, a rallying cry for a people. It has mostly been so. One individual mind leaves its impress on the great eras of the life of humanity. A Noah, an Abraham, a Samuel, a David, an Isaiah, a Peter, a Paul, a Leonidas, a Scipio, a Cæsar, a Cromwell, a Luther, a Knox. The multitude is held back from evil by the strength of solitary combatants. Such is the grandeur and might of a human soul, doing its duty with the full strength derivable from the Living and Almighty God.

From many instances, recall that of Scotland nearly three

* Ewald's History of Israel, Vol. iv. 79.

centuries ago, when the Protestant Reformation seemed arrested, and the light of truth was about being eclipsed by the measures of the old priesthood—and suddenly the news is heard through the city: "John Knox is come!" The historian says: "The cry arose everywhere, 'John Knox is come!' All the town came rushing into the streets; the old and the young, the lordly and the lowly, were seen mingling and marvelling together; all tasks of duty and servitude and pleasure were forsaken, the sick-beds of the dying were deserted, the priests abandoned their altars and masses, mothers set down their infants and ran to inquire what had come to pass; travellers suddenly mounted and suddenly speeded into the country with the tidings. At every cottage-door the inmates stood in clusters, silent and wondering, as horseman came following horseman, crying 'John Knox is come!' Barques that were departing bore up to tell others afar at sea. The shepherds were called in from the hills; the warders on the castle, when at the sound of quickened feet approaching they challenged the comers, were answered, 'John Knox is come!' Studious men were roused from their books; nuns looked out fearful and inquiring; priests and friars were seen standing by themselves, shunned like lepers. The whole land was stirred as with the inspiration of some new element, and the hearts of the persecutors were withered." That "one-man ministry" saved Scotland, aye more, saved large tracts of Europe and the world, not only from the desolations of the Papacy, but also, to the health and wealth, the truth and beauty, the peace and victory of the Gospel of Christ.

Do not be deterred from doing your duty because you

are alone. Speak out for truth and right in your house of business and on the pleasure-ground, at home and abroad. Fight for God and with God, and fear not. Through Him you will do valiantly. Do not measure your duty by the numbers on your side. Loneliness is not a sign of error. Crowds are not evidence of truth. The most effective ministry "is a one-man ministry;" a work of the whole individual soul, fearless in its courage, absorbing in its zeal, and dedicated to God in faith and love. Let us each find his own task, and focus the whole self upon it. This is the question, What is MY work? This my strength and victory, the presence of the LIVING GOD.

VII. Thus we are brought to the conclusion forced upon us by this intense sentence, that God, and God alone, is the explanation of Elijah's life and mission. He is the key to his biography, to his education, and to his power, to all that he was and did as a Prophet-Reformer. Men have tried to account for him, to trace his genealogy, to find the name of the village in which he was reared in the designation which introduces him as the Tishbite, or to explain his hardy qualities by following him into the "mountains of Gilead." I have no objection to the research. I welcome it. But at last we must admit that he comes down swift as lightning upon the busy haunts of men; and so far from being evolved from his age, enters into fiercest conflict with the entire drift of his time, and is the directest antithesis of Ahab and all his hosts. Human life is bigger than all our theories. Facts refuse to be chained together in a complete and observable sequence. God is at the centre of human history. His eternal Will is at work,

and men and ministers are His gift.* He explains "the gaps" in the long story of Elijah. He is father and mother, school and teacher, guide and master, inward impulse, and sustaining strength—all in all. *The Fact of the Real Presence of the Living God; the Idea of an irresistible mandate from God for a specific work; and the enormous power God infuses into solitary souls for His work, carry us to the secret sources of the courageous and powerful ministry of this sturdy, grandly independent, and brave man.*

VIII. Elijah's God is our God for ever, and He will be our guide and strength even unto death. His power is available for all of us, for each of us, and for each specific individual ministry; the class we teach, the healing we give to the bruised, the rebuke we have to administer, the war against vice we wage. Like Elisha we are tempted to say amid many discouragements, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah!" The brave workers are gone; our champions and leaders, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? The Jordan of difficulty rolls before us: on the other side is our work, and here we have no more than a prophet's mantle—a bright memory full of God; but we have *that*, and with it we may cover ourselves, and in it call aloud for the Lord God of Elijah.

Where is He? Thanks be to God for the Bible of to-day, for there is no speech nor language where His voice is not heard, no lane of life His presence does not illumine, no suffering and galling sorrows He will not help us to

* *Cf* Inaugural Lecture by Rev. Charles Kingsley as Professor of *Modern History*, delivered at Cambridge, and now published as an introduction to the "Roman and the Teuton."

bear. He is the same to-day in London as He was in Elijah's yesterday in Israel, and will be the same strong and loving Father to-morrow as He is to-day.

"The same," and yet not the same; but nearer to us, His grace and power more *easily* available, His inspirations richer and fuller; nearer and more available in Christ Jesus His Son, "the great power of God;" making the lowliest feel closely related to the God of the universe, rendering His presence the most familiar, tender, and inspiring the mind receives, and His energy more efficient in the souls of men every day; leading hosts of warriors in a pure and uplifting contest against all sin and error; and quickening the sense of duty till it becomes intolerable, save as it gradually passes into an overflowing delight, constituting every redeemed soul a priest to God and a king over men.

Where is He? O soul of man, knowest thou not? Hast thou not felt His touch, and been blessed by His presence? Art *thou* not already stirred by His Spirit to penitence for sin, and to hope and trust in His forgiveness and strength? "Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the abyss.....The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach; because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.....for whosoever shalt call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"THE burthen of suffering seems a tombstone hung around us, while in reality it is only a weight necessary to keep down the diver while he is collecting pearls." RICHTER.

"Joubert cared far more about perfecting himself, than about making himself a reputation." M. ARNOLD.

"But safe art thou, for strong is He,
Eternal Love all love will keep;
The sweet shall as the bitter be,
Thou shalt rejoice as thou dost weep."

LYNCH.

The Gospel of the Exile.

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."—*Isaiah* xl. 31.

I. This is the Gospel of the Exile; the "Gospel before the Gospel;"* the good news of the swift accession of power and deliverance to the Jewish people, humiliated, dispirited, and tired out by monotonously waiting in their Babylonian captivity for a long-expected and long-delayed good; an evangel preached to grey-haired men and tearful women in obedience to the Divine saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, tell her that God lives and loves, that her sufferings are surely ending, and the day of clearer revelation and full redemption is at the doors."

That Gospel came to these disconsolate captives "not in word only, but in power, and in much assurance of the Holy Ghost." Men who were themselves sufferers had learnt its meaning, felt its force, and gained strength from it; and therefore preached it with the freshness of a present faith, the conviction of an undazzled vision, the contagious

* T. K. Cheyne *Isaiah*, vol. i. 238.

accent of brotherly sympathy, and the ringing clearness of a Divine certainty. It was no cunningly-devised fable, no dream of an over-wrought fancy, no mere child of painful desire ; but an actual teaching of the Living God—a teaching living in the speaker's soul, and passing to eager and afflicted hearers, charged with power to eject a leaden despair, revive a withered faith, create heroic patience, and inspire a cheerful expectation.

Like water to the thirsty, like good news from friends in a far country, this prophetic message, delivered in a hundred different tones of sweet persuasiveness and of clarion-like energy, of fraternal appeal and fiery earnestness, was heard on the banks of the Chebar, and in the cities of Babylonia, assuring the exiles that if they held on to GOD and would not lose heart ; if they would battle against their despairs and courageously wait for Jehovah, they would receive of His fulness and grace for grace. Light would arise in darkness. Even though the youths became wearied and faint, and the brave stumbled into the "Slough of Despond," yet God's waiting ones should, like the eagles, renew their plumage, soar aloft and bathe their wings in the gold of the sunbeam, far away from all the cloud and gloom of earth ; run on missionary errands of mercy and not grow tired of their philanthropic task ; walk to the ends of the earth, dispensing the knowledge of the true God, and not faint.

II. Like all gospels, this Gospel of the Exile is God's. As all suns are God's and all souls are God's, so all gospels for souls are His. He, the Creator and Father, Redeemer and Regenerator of men, is Himself the beating heart of every

message that brings solace to the distressed, healing and comfort to the bruised and wounded, fortitude to the afflicted, fresh fires to the embers of a dying faith, and a soaring and aggressive activity to the "remnant" of a defeated and prostrate people. Every true prophet's great appeal is "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard" of GOD? Don't you know Him? Who He is and what He is? The whole air rings with His name. The universe is lit up with His glory. The stars speak His power. The entire past is a scroll written over and over with His handwriting. The living present is His workshop! The heart of man His home! Don't know Him! Not heard of Him! Where have you lived? What have you been doing? What darkness has blinded your eyes? What cotton stuff has filled your ears? What opiates have drugged your conscience? He is the Incomparable God. Work does not tire Him. Difficulty does not beat Him back. Defeat does not change His purpose, though it may delay it. In His ceaseless activity, fatherly solicitude, and unsleeping watchfulness for His people, He fainteth not, nor is weary. The exile is not a mistake. You are not in the wrong school. He knows what He is doing. There is no searching of His understanding. He is all-wise, and giveth force to the feeble, and to the powerless He supplies abounding strength. Believe in Him, wait on Him, wait for Him, and you will become younger and stronger than ever.

So God in His loving care for, and constant education of souls, is the Alpha and Omega of this whole gospel for captive Israel. The "Comfort ye, comfort ye," with which it starts is the prophetic echo of His clear voice, penetrating the depths of the human spirit with its strong consolations,

and filling the vista of life with the vision of a faultless and victorious Leader. Does the *preacher* of the desert cry aloud, that the road from Babylon to Jerusalem is to be levelled all the way? It is because he is God's herald preparing the way for God Himself, as He comes to establish His salvation before all the earth. Is Zion bidden to go up into a high mountain, and lift up her voice mightily? It is that her daughter-cities may all hear the good tidings—"Behold your God!" Behold He cometh as a strong Victor, dispensing His rewards and administering His judgments; He cometh as a Shepherd, taking the lambkins in His arms, and gently leading those that give suck; He cometh as the matchless Deity, the Unequalled One, before Whom all the gods of the nations are as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. Yea, lift up your eyes on high, read all Bibles, receive all messages! Who hath created these shining orbs? The heavens declare His glory! The stars answer to His call like soldiers to their names on a muster-roll, and march through the spaces under His direction like well-ordered battalions at the bidding of Cyrus; and because of His great strength not one of the whole host is missing. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, my way is hidden from Jehovah, my right hath been let slip by my God? Hast thou not perceived that God is thy Friend, that His nature and character are unique, that He is unwearied in working, faultless in plan, constant in love, and rich in mercy? Wait thou for Him; and thy righteousness shall go forth as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day!

We cannot have any good news for any age, or for any people, or for any soul, without Him. All flesh is as grass. The grass withereth; the flower fadeth, but the Word of

the Lord—the revelation of the inexhaustible God, liveth and abideth for ever; and this is the word, which by the gospel of the prophets was preached to God's waiting and trusting ones in Babylon; and which has been preached with greater clearness and fulness in later times by Jesus Christ, God's Son, assuring us that if we wait for God, we shall be baptized into immortal youth, and fired and filled with undecaying vigour.

The strength of God is the salvation of men.

III. Like all divine evangels, this good news for the captives of Babylon is addressed immediately to a special need, and adapted by its *form* to effect a particular result, viz.: that of patient endurance of acute affliction, steadfast resistance to cowardly fears and weakening apprehension, brave battling with anxiety and care-wornness, a resolute and determined climb towards the sunny heights and clear expanses of cheerfulness and joy.

The Gospel is for men and women who have lost their strength in living, and are losing it more and more, day by day, till they fear its utter extinction by the presence of thickening despairs, and the ceaseless gnawing of spiritual fibre by silent misery and unutterable grief. Nothing tires like hopelessness. Nothing makes the heart sick like long delays. Nothing wears out patience and faith like the oppressions of a monotonous and insistent sorrow. To feel forsaken of God, in the midst of an alien and scornful population, to hear the "bitter cry" of outcast mothers and hungry children and miserable men, ringing in their ears night and day, to be stared out of sight by the chaotic perplexities and gross anomalies of a world where idlers take

the best wages, lazy cowards seize the booty of battles you have fought, brute power tramples down sensitive souls in their love of right, Dives inherits wealth and keeps it, and in his base heartlessness not only neglects Lazarus festering and starving at his gate, but seems as merry as a singing lark, and as happy as the day is long; this was too painful for them; even the truest and hopefullest could not endure it without wincing; and the feebler ones lamented and whined over their accumulated sorrows as they felt strength and heart failing them, and a resistless and deadly "faintness" spreading over their death-struck souls.*

Unto them, therefore, is the word of this salvation sent. "Wait for God." "Wait upon the Lord." "Trust in Him at *all* times, ye people, pour out your heart before Him." He will come. Look for His appearing. He must come. He cannot help coming, His nature urges Him towards you with all the tenderness of His love, and all the helpfulness of His omnipotence; He has not forgotten you, and He will not fail to give you strength according to your day. Hold on; and still hold on, and the issue will be well. Sharp as the discipline is, the results will vindicate its utmost severity if only you maintain a steadfast trust in God, and wait on Him for His power and grace. Do not take mean methods of obtaining comfort, but patiently and tenaciously cling to the right and the true. Never pick up the platitudes of the street, saying life is a poor game, not worth the fight; an empty masquerade, and not a sober, strenuous business; the momentary skimming of a foam-bubble on an agitated sea, and not a plan and care of God. Be not

* *Cf.* Lamentations i. 4.; ii. 10, 19.; iv. 1-9.; v. 12.: Psalms lxix-cii.

bewitched by the glossy falsehoods, which say: it's no good to be honest; goodness is a failure; purity is a mistake; life is a mockery and a snare. Be manly and face the obstinate questionings of your lot *until* you understand them, struggle with the problems of your education till they are solved. Bear the yoke of trial with a courageous spirit, and walk erect beneath its presence, assured that the victorious manhood will justify the painfullest part of the youthful loss, for they that wait on God shall renew their strength.

"Wait for God" is thus the ever-recurring and all-luminous word of the Exile-Gospel. It is the refrain of psalm, the golden thread woven through the web of drama, the "application" of sermon, and the highest note of prophetic oracle. It is with us all through this period—the one flashing ray of eternal hope shining in this darkes night of Israel's history.

Faith in God takes multitudinous forms in the long story of the soul's life with God. No one mode of speech can describe its varieties, set out its different moods, or illustrate its manifestations towards God, and the facts of our singularly complex and indescribably opulent life.

Some imagine they can tell a soul all it needs to hear of God in a breath, pack the whole Gospel into half-a-dozen syllables, and direct the spirit of man to his Father as they direct a letter. So wedded are they to their familiar jargon that they never think of giving more than one counsel for the infinite variety of human conditions, or of treating the Revelation of God as if it were more than one line in a book, or the writing on a dead and deaf guide-post, and therefore many suffering and captive souls never find

the message that renews the strength of hope, and re-animates a failing courage.

Not thus has God dealt with us. In differing phrase, and set in manifold forms, we behold the life of "faith" in Genesis and in Revelation, in Isaiah and in John, in the songs of David and in the letters of Paul, in the Book of Esther and in the Four Gospels. In the dawn of Revelation "Faith in God" is communion with Him, Enoch walking and talking with the Eternal; in Abraham it is a pure intent, a right aim, a death-defying obedience; in David it is a frank, passionate, and free out-pouring of soul into the friendly ear of the Father; in Paul it is the willing acceptance of the message concerning Christ, and the consequent acceptance of Christ as Saviour from sin and Leader in life; in John it is love which fulfils all law, brings all light, and clothes with all power; in Isaiah and Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Ezekiel, the songs and prayers and sermons of the captivity—it is "Wait for God." Seek Him with your whole heart and ye shall surely find Him. Wait patiently for Him and be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart; wait, I say, and they all say—wait on the Lord. Babel is falling, Chaldean tyrrany will be cut short. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

It is a Divine *law* on which this direction rests. God *must* be waited for. We cannot anticipate Him. He goes

Cf. Psalms xxxvii. 7-34, cxxx. 6; Isaiah xxxv. 1-10; Lamentations iv. 25-26; Habbakuk ii. 3-4.

before us with the blessings of His goodness, and we must follow, for we cannot force Him in our education and discipline, and we lose power by hurry, waste fibre by impatience, and risk everything by not waiting *for* Him, as well as waiting *on* Him, in prayer and eager enquiry and filial obedience. While the soil is frozen and hard we cannot compel the crop; we wait for the spring. The farmer of the Nile waits till the waters rise and then casts his bread upon them, hoping to see his harvest after many days. There is a time for growth, and we must take facts according to God's plan. Hast thou not perceived that God is a God of order as well as of progress and deliverance, and that He gives strength for education and discipline as well as for service?

Even young men faint in the conflict because they will not wait *for* God. Defeated and overwhelmed with despair you say, "It avails nothing, I am no forwarder to-day than I was last week. I am as far from the kingdom of God as ever; my passions are as wild, my mind as untameable as it was when I started for a better and manlier life." Recall Moses. Did he not in his impatience lift up the standard of freedom forty years too soon? Was he not banished into exile there to wait on God and for God, and to be trained by God, as the champion of His captive people? Imitate young David, who would not slay King Saul, his persecuting pursuer, when urged to it by his friends, but waited for God, and ascended the throne of Israel without a murmur and amid universal delight. "Learn to labour and to wait." "*Grow* in grace."

But is not waiting for God cowardly indolence and fatalistic apathy! Cowardly indolence, indeed! Nothing will

more test any fibre you've got! Fatalistic apathy! Grosser mistake could not be made than to suppose that this message is a direction to puling feebleness and pining inactivity. It means, be strong enough to hold out under the heaviest pressure, to wait in the path of duty, and fight without a peevish whimper of fear, or a fretful cry of distrust. Hold on to God in the fiercest storm, in trust and love and hope; without a shadow of misgiving or a tremor of doubt. Get up after the heaviest blow and stand firm as a rock, confessing all sin to God with a real sorrow, and laying a fresh grasp upon His power to be faithful unto death!

Is it the too hasty expectation of success in your work for God amongst the young, or for the poor and ungrateful, that has relaxed your hold of your ideal and permitted you to drop it in the dust? Have you said in the jar and fret of life; "I cannot press forward towards the mark. It is too much for me and it is in vain. The cherished ideal of a noble life is only a bitter regret and the coveted task for God and man is a wearisome burden." Soldiers of Christ; endure hardness! Wait for God and on Him. He is nearer than you think, and

> "No star is ever lost we once have seen,
> We always may be what we might have been."

Wait for God, desponding children of God, exiled in the dreary deserts of suffering and affliction; hoping for deliverance and hoping against hope! Counteract gloom and low spirits with the exceeding precious promises of your Heavenly Father! Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Trust His love; it is real and tender

and strong. Commune with Him and in the language of the much-suffering and calmly-trusting Lynch—

"God's comforts they shall strengthen thee
Like flowing waters cool,
And He shall for thy spirit be
A fountain ever full.

The Lord is glorious and strong,
Our God is very nigh,
O trust in Him, trust now in Him
And have security.

He shall be to thee like the sea,
And thou shalt surely feel
His wind that bloweth healthily
Thy sicknesses to heal."

IV. Again, like all gospels from the heavens, this one for the Hebrew Exiles obtained its full and complete *verification* from the uncontradicted facts of human experience. The captive people waited for God and on God, and they did not wait in vain. In their distress they cried unto the Lord and He delivered them out of the misery and weakness of all their troubles. They prayed in hope, not breaking their harps as if they were done with, but hanging them on the willows by the river as expecting to strike their strings again to the music of Zion's songs.

Their expectation was realised. Deliverance came. The ransomed of the Lord returned: but the return was the least good they received and deliverance their smallest boon. Grace and strength came by the prophets and by prayer in unbroken continuity, and fresh gifts of power and light and zeal and joy, enlarged and enriched their

lives. They were born again, born from above. They renewed their youth, and became a regenerated, pure, missionary people ; found Babylon a better school than Jerusalem, and the severities and perils of captivity a healthier discipline than the luxuries and security of freedom. THE SEVENFOLD BLESSING OF THE EXILE stands written in the unimpeachable Chronicles of Israel, and the world. From that date the wealth of men in GOD, in the MESSIAH-MEDIATOR, in WORSHIP, in LIFE, and in HUMANITY, has been a larger and a more readily available and exchangeable treasure.

(1) First and most distinctive of the gains of the Jews from their captivity, stands their advanced and perfected knowledge of God. The Divine Idea was lifted above all the restrictions of race and locality to the throne of the universe ; the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob was recognized as the Saviour of the ends of the earth. Keen and regretted anguish cleansed their vision, and as a community they saw more of the Eternal through their tears than their fathers had beheld in all their joys. Repulsed by the world, persecuted and despised, scorned and hated, their prophets and priests slain,* their nationality annihilated, they were driven to God. They must wait on Him, or whirl and swing in the eddies of a deep despair. They knew not what to do, and their eyes are strained to see God. They have no king like the Reforming Josiah ; no Temple ; Zion is in ruins ; no sanctuary ; no ritual sacrifice, no altar, and no real help from the priests ; they are goaded to God, and to the deepest truths and most spiritual facts of life and thought. An insupportable grief breaks their

* Lamentations ii. 9, 20.

hearts; and in their contrition and penitence they cry for God's forgiveness and renewal; and He answers their cry, cleanses and enlarges their spiritual conceptions, gives them a clear insight of the indestructible foundations of their life as a community, and of their mission as the apostles and teachers of the world. God was in the Exile, reconciling the rebellious people to Himself by the severities of discipline and the chastenings of sorrow.

Strange indeed is it that we men should have to be driven to our best life, whipped and spurred towards the goal of righteousness and peace, violently torn from our false self-seeking ways and compelled to despair of ourselves and everything else, before we will rest in Him, Who is our only satisfaction and our true joy! We wear ourselves out of patience by our philosophy to find God, when true penitence for our sins would at once lift the veil that hides Him from our sight. We traverse the universe to trace His working, when to genuine contrition He Himself comes swiftly as a loving mother to her sick child. We fret and chafe in our sufferings and under our chastisements, when to patience and meekness the God of all comfort comes with His sweetest and most refreshing revelations. And yet through His mercy we live to say with Israel, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word."*

* The prodigious service of the Exile life in enlarging and clearing the conception of God, has been a little obscured by the habitual notion of the work and influence of Cyrus. Cyrus has been credited with the motives and work of a "religious reformer," and treated as the propagator of a monotheistic faith. It has been *assumed* that he was a Persian, and like other Persians, a disciple of Zoroaster; but the Scripture itself says, "I girded thee, though *thou hast not known Me*," —Isaiah xlv. 5. This Scripture is confirmed and illustrated by the

(2) Next in prominence to this thought of God, comes up out of the Exile the more definitely shaped and clearly conceived image of the Anointed of the Lord, the Daysman or Mediator, the Lord our Righteousness, the Herald of a New Covenant, the suffering and conquering Servant of God, Who is to realize the Ideal Jerusalem, and bring a new heaven and a new earth. The revelation of God in His infinite vastness, as Lord and Ruler of all worlds, and of all states and of all peoples, stimulates the yearning for a Meditator, Who shall bridge over the gulf between the Great Creator and the weak and suffering children of men. Towards Him and His appearing the trustful heart goes out in a deep strong hope, though with a dim, but gradually clearing vision.*

ancient monuments recently translated and expounded; for in them Cyrus calls himself, not King of Persia, but of Elam (or Ansan); and though he was of Persian descent, yet he was an Elamite, and a *polytheist*, and to conciliate the Babylonians worshipped Belmerodach and Nebo, the chief deities of the Babylonian Creed. It was not from any sympathy with the Hebrew religion that he sent the Jews back to Palestine, but solely because he saw that it was a political blunder to transport conquered people into different parts of his dominions, and only served to spread disaffection and create trouble. Cyrus was not God's "shepherd," because of any opinions about worship he cherished; but because his political programme rendered him a fit instrument to co-operate in working out the plan of advancing and establishing a Divine Kingdom, by means of the distribution of a pure knowledge of the one God, cleansed and extended though not acquired by the Jews in their captivity. The Cylinder of Cyrus says, "I am Cyrus, the King of legions . . . the King of Elam . . . the great grandson of Teispes . . . whose rule has been beloved by Bel and Nebo . . may they bless my projects with prosperity." *Cf. Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, by A. H. Sayce, M.A., pp. 176, 183.

* "Under the form of a servant and the misery of the deepest humiliation, the true congregation of Jehovah carried the salvation of their people and of the heathen on their hearts. The conception of the Servant of Jehovah in *Isaiah* xl.—xlvi. with respect to its lowest *broad basis*, is entire Israel; with respect to its centre it is the congregation remaining true to God, which in the midst of the dispersion

(3) Fired by this hope of a personal Redeemer, and controlled by a spiritual conception of Jehovah, the *worship* of God entered on that final *spiritual* phase which has never been wholly eclipsed, though it has suffered, and still suffers, many painful obscurations. First, there is such a signal and hearty recognition of the *power of prayer* in the individual and in the community, as to warrant the idea that the exile was the origin of the prayer-meeting ;* then, next, there is a total detachment from all ritual, and the cheerful acceptance of "little sanctuaries," synagogues, or "meeting-houses," and even of quiet spots by the river-side, in place of the gorgeous temple and its arresting and impressive symbolism† ; and, thirdly, the spell of idolatry is broken for ever. Lying bare before their eyes, exposed in all its vileness, systematic licentiousness, and wholesale corruption, and identified day by day with their conquerors and oppressors, idolatry itself received all the loathing and hatred they felt for their rulers, and created so bitter an antagonism to idol-worship, that the emotion has never left the Jewish race from that day to this. The one God is all and in all. He is unique. The idols are detestable. As the fires of Smithfield made the English Protestants, so the flames of persecution in Babylon made the Jews Monotheists, Puritans, and Iconoclasts. As Norman and Saxon were welded into unity by common calamities and common

is the scattered seed of the future congregation growing together from Israel and the heathen. From this centre the conception becomes personal. Its pyramidal apex is the future Christ, in Whom the sufferings of the congregation of Jehovah are reproduced and culminate, and by Whom Israel's redemptive calling is completed."—Delitzsch, *Old Testament History of Redemption*, 142.

* Ewald, History of Israel, Vol. v. 23, 24.

† Ezekiel xi. 16; Psalm cxxxvii. 1.

sufferings, so Jews and proselytes became a coherent and conquering unity under the influence of a fierce, intolerant, and scornful Paganism, and prepared to welcome the message, "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

(4) Bound up with this we see the generation of a higher ethic ; the birth of a nobler conception of life, as the sphere for rightness of aim, and righteousness of character. Through this gate of tribulation Israel enters into the kingdom of holiness. "*Holiness* as the law, *chastisement* as the means, and the *holy remnant* as the result—these are the three fundamental thoughts of this Divine dialogue, the foundation of the whole ministry of Isaiah."* "The Lord our Righteousness" is the name given by the hoary prophet Jeremiah to the expected Messiah in these tragic times ; a name minted in these fires of suffering, and bearing abundant trace of the dominant aspiration of the saints of God. Jehovah is felt to be the all-holy, and it is seen that humanity cannot have its true and final honour until it is saved and ruled by a righteous Lord, and decked with the crown of righteousness ; and though that coronation day is still distant, the impulse communicated towards it by the Exile is not wholly spent.

(5) The temporary limitations and restrictions of Israel being annulled, it is forthwith lifted into the stream of universal history, never to be taken out again as long as sun and moon endure. It is proved that Hebraism can exist without a temple and without a priest, without an altar and without a land, without anything or anybody

* Godet's Biblical Studies, O.T., 147.

save the soul and God ; it ceases to be a local religion and becomes universal, and instead of remaining a national luxury becomes an aggressive, missionary and world-saving agency. If it can exist out of Palestine it can exist anywhere. God is the Saviour of all men. "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee." * The golden age leaps to the front never to go behind again. The idea of everlasting progress, of upward development, of universal redemption, is born in the hearts of these penitent and trustful souls ; and they are constituted the Servants and Apostles and Missionaries of the Universal God to universal man.

(6) With glowing ardour and intense enthusiasm these elect souls go forth on this service, seeking to establish a knowledge of the true God, urging the heathen to accept the light they enjoy, and sharing with them as proselytes the peace and prosperity brought by truth and righteousness. The missionary SPIRIT, as well as the missionary IDEA, glows and throbs in the oracles and songs which represent the highest thought and the purest emotion of this time.

(7) And this was completed by the enlargement and recension of that unique and marvellous missionary agent, the Old Testament literature, so splendidly enriched with some of its most pathetic and consolatory contributions, so carefully transcribed and sacredly guarded by the "Scribes," who started into existence in these days ;* and so diligently pondered by those choice spirits who had learnt to sigh

* Psalm lxxxvi. 9. ; *Cf. The Divine Origin of Christianity*, by R. S. Storrs, D.D., p. 222-224 ; Josephus *Adv. Apion*, ii. 40.

* Geikie, Hours with the Bible, vi. 384.

for God as their exceeding joy, and to serve Him as their chief delight. It was the Great Missionary Book. "Salvation is of the Jews."

Believe it, then; exhausted men get fresh strength by trustful longing for God; renew their spiritual energy, their faith in goodness, their power for self-sacrificing work, for fleet-footed missions of mercy, by waiting on God and for God, listening to His word, speaking to Him in prayer, and communing with His Spirit. It is fact, demonstrated and unquestionable. It is history, and actual experience; not theory or speculation. It stands not in the wishes and hopes of men, but graven in the annals of the people of God.

Oh, let us, my brethren, hold fast our faith in the infinite fertility of patient and trustful suffering, and take to heart this grand historic proof, that the way to true service lies through heroic waiting upon God, looking out for His will and bravely doing or suffering it; that in penitence and faith lie concealed all our graces and powers; that we are so poor and foolish and vain that we cannot be trusted with prosperity, but like children need to be watched moment by moment, to be chastised into goodness and disciplined for service; and that at the back of all our tragedies and sorrows, there is written the consolatory Gospel, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe in Christ;" "Who, though He was a Son yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered;" believe that though "no chastisement is pleasant, but rather grievous yet afterwards it worketh out the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby."

V. Finally, this gospel, like all its fellows, never dies.

It endures for ever and ever as a living message, not effete though old, not wasted though abundantly used, but partaking of the unwearied energy and eternal reproductiveness of its Infinite Source. Man's wants are too diverse to be met by any one messenger. God speaks at sundry times, and by different voices; but no voice ever dies out, no message is ever wholly lost, and if not for one soul, yet for another and another, it is quick and powerful, renewing faith, and hope, and zeal. Do not we all need the gospel of this morning? Are we not conscious of waste and loss, of miserable insufficiency for service, and of poor and low aims, and poorer and lower achievements? Are there not moments, when the best of us are overtaken by fits of moral stupidity, and we do acts and utter words that punish us an hour afterwards so severely, that we walk softly for days and months in the memory of our irritating weakness? Do we not drift into the dark, and exiled from God and from peace, from light and joy, sigh for the return of His salvation and the presence of His free Spirit? Alas! these interruptions of the glad consciousness of strength occur often, and compel us to think God has forgotten us, and let slip our right. Oh! let us banish the unbelief and wait for Him, and upon Him, ready to welcome the cleansing fires of His love, if only we may know Him better, realize the free access of His power, and go forth on a career of glowing missionary activity for the help of the helpless, the healing of the sick, and the saving of the lost.

"OUR wills are ours, we know not how.
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

TENNYSON.

"The will is the spinal column of our personality."

BUSHNELL.

"The Bible never calls a man a crystal, a stone, a lifeless clod. It never in any manner gives the sinner to imagine for a moment that he is not a living spirit, and as such entirely accountable to God for what he is, and for the exercise of the original endowment of free-will."

PROF. COATS.

"'God's everlasting love! What would'st thou more?'
O true and tender friend, well hast thou spoken!
My heart was restless, weary, sad and sore,
And longed and listened for some heaven-sent token;
And, like a child that knows not why it cried,
'Mid God's full promises it moaned 'Unsatisfied!'

"We thirst for *God*, our treasure is above,
Earth has no gift our one desire to meet;
And this desire is pledge of His own love.
Sweet question, with no answer!—oh, *how* sweet!
My heart in chiming gladness, o'er and o'er,
Sings on—'God's everlasting love! What would'st thou more?"

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

The Gospel of the Exile Incarnate in Ezekiel.

"BEHOLD, ALL SOULS ARE MINE; AS THE SOUL OF THE FATHER SO ALSO THE SOUL OF THE SON IS MINE; THE SOUL THAT SINNETH IT SHALL DIE. . . . CAST AWAY FROM YOU ALL YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS WHEREIN YE HAVE TRANSGRESSED, AND MAKE YOU A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT, FOR WHY WILL YE DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL. . . . AND I WILL SPRINKLE CLEAN WATER UPON YOU, AND YE SHALL BE CLEAN. . . . A NEW HEART ALSO WILL I GIVE YOU, AND A NEW SPIRIT WILL I PUT WITHIN YOU. . . . AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT IN YOU, AND YE SHALL LIVE."

—*Ezekiel* xviii. 4-31; xxxvi. 25-26; xxxvii. 14.

Last Sunday I spoke on the Gospel of the Exile; this morning I want you to think with me for a few minutes of the same good news as it appears *incarnate* and embodied in the life and work of the prophet Ezekiel.

Every living "word" must be made flesh and dwell among us; live in a human and personal life, breathe our warm breath, grasp us with sympathetic and friendly hands, carry our sins and bear our sorrows, if it is to gain admission at "lowly doors;" stir the "spirit's inner deeps;" compel and inspire to an ampler life the reluctant souls of men. Disembodied ideas are very poor things in themselves, mere ghosts with which we may talk in our dreams, but from which we get little satisfying guidance, and less veritable strength in our hard work-a-day life. True it is, that lilies preach innocence without words, and violets whisper humility without lips; that thoughts are made potent by poetry, eloquent by the artist's brush, and soothing and rousing by harp and organ; but it is when they throb and glow with the magnetism of an apt and living personality that they transfuse the soul with their greatness, fire the imagination with their flame, compel us to "clutch the golden keys and mould a mighty state's decrees," and ever move from high to higher, and "without haste, without rest," on to the highest. The maximum of power is never gained by ideas till they possess and sway the "body prepared for them," and clothe themselves with the subtle and mysterious influences of a vital and impressive personality.

The notion of rescuing the waifs and strays of town and village life was in the air of the last century for a long time, and occasionally passed out of its formlessness into print and speech; but it did not grapple with evil, and become the power of God unto the salvation of young England, until it was incarnate in Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, and through him, became, as the Sunday

School, "the pillar of a people's hope, the centre of a world's desire." The brutal hardness and ferocious cruelty of the prisons of Europe had arrested the fickle attention again and again, but no blow was struck to abate the prodigious mischiefs of criminal life, and elevate punishment into a minister of justice till John Howard was fired and possessed with the passion of prison-reform, and dedicated his will to its advancement with the glorious *abandon* and success-compelling energy of the prophet. The same is true of the war for personal liberty, of the battles against superstition, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Now our Bible is a book of ideas—ideas the most simple and sublime, central and essential to all human welfare; but these ideas do not appear as ghosts of a strange and distant world, but clothed in our own humanity, our veritable flesh and blood, speaking "our own tongue wherein we were born," and moving in the midst of the experiences of sin and sorrow, temptation and suffering, and painful progress common to us all. It is not by the naked assertion of historical facts, nor the bare recital of abstract propositions, but by the representation of men whose lives help us to perceive and feel the truth and meaning of the things we ourselves are now living in, that it quickens and holds our sympathy, subdues into acquiesence and fills with delight. The Biblical evangels are all in men. Each one comes with the momentum of a human personality. The Gospel of all the Gospels, the pearl of greatest price, is in the *Man Christ Jesus;* and in accordance with this Divine principle, *the Gospel of the Exile was incarnate in the prophets, and notably in* EZEKIEL. His very name was a Divine

promise, "God shall strengthen;" and his life an enforcement of the beautiful saying, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint." The vision of the glory of God, which issues in his consecration to his prophetic work, is a revelation of the Divine power in its sleepless and unwearied activity, its perfect harmony, its inscrutable intelligence and resistless energy; and it has written above and beneath and round about it the saying, "I am the Lord God ALMIGHTY, stand on thy feet and I will speak to thee. Be brave and fear not. Utter all My will and I will be with thee." We see not only that the man has strength according to his day—severe as that day is in its demands—but also how he waits on God, and for God, by what channels he receives his power, and in what ways it reaches and ennobles him, and so makes him God's Strong One, the hero of Jehovah, and the evangelist of the Exile.

But great as are the gains of this humanizing of ideas, we cannot have an incarnation without some seeming and real drawbacks. The "Word" becoming flesh grows up as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face, He is despised and not esteemed. The brightest Gospel in actual conflict with the prejudices and corruptions of men appears very different from what it is in outline and plan, in promise and vision. There is always an "offence of the Cross." The human is common, and

the common is despised as "commonplace," prosaic, and dull; though all history and life affirm that it is the "common-place that touches our human nature at a great many periods, and at a great many levels." Ezekiel, like most of us, is "not competent to keep the heights he is able to gain," when "the Spirit enters into him and sets him upon his feet.*" Indeed, it has been said, not without reason, he appears at times far more of a legal than an evangelical prophet; that if the hard, external, and mechanical Judaism of the days of our Lord is to be traced to any special parentage, it must be to this son of Buzi; † that Ezekiel is a Ritualist of strong priestly bias and decided type, and fails to go the length of the truths he teaches because of his lingering affection for the rites and ceremonies of the ancient religion, and falls painfully short of the universalism that underlies his appeals to the conscience, and his visions of the future, when he objects to the presence of foreigners, uncircumcised in flesh and heart, as habitually profaning the temple of God.‡

But all this, in so far as it is fact, only makes Ezekiel a more perfect mirror of the life of the captivity, and gives to the Gospel of the Exile a more completely human setting. Its fierce conflicts and fiery collisions, tough abuses and tenacious evils, are laid bare, as well as its exceeding great and precious promises, enrapturing forecasts, and great though slowly attained results. So be it

---

* Ezekiel ii. 3.

† Smend on Ezekiel, *Cf.* Delitzsch on the *Old Testament History of Redemption*, pp. 146-7.

‡ Ezekiel xliv. 6; viii. xl.-xlviii. See also Robertson Smith *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 249, 374.

that he does not reach the rapture of Isaiah, and is more artistic and mechanical than Jeremiah, and it is clear that his feet stand within the Old Testament economy, and he himself partakes of the limitations and restrictions of his age, yet his eyes peer far towards the coming of the Son of man, the descent of the all-quickening Spirit, and the resurrection of a dead humanity from the grave of its corruptions. The signs and proofs of imperfection notwithstanding, it is palpable that Ezekiel, moved by the Holy Ghost, is a man of *invincible newness of spirit, works by methods of evangelical thoroughness, and inspires and impels by motives of a decisively Christian quality.*

No worker must part with his ideal because he does not reach it, or surrender his loftiest and amplest truths because of the partial and fragmentary way in which he is able to apply them, or the feebleness with which he continues to apprehend them. He must speak according to his vision ; say all he knows of truth, and work as near to his accepted standard as he can. We must have a gospel in our mind larger than that we have attained, and utter messages whose full and exhaustless significance we do not realize. It is a false theory of life which bids us tie down our aspirations to our achievements, bound our yearnings and efforts by our successes, and limit our exhortations and forecasts by our own poor victories ! Merciful Lord ! what should we be but the driest of dry bones, dead in hope and in desire and in endeavour were this our fate ? Thanks be to God, who keeps the fires of zeal alive to the end, and enables a Victor Hugo at eighty-three

years of age to think and work for a United States of Europe, in which miserable jealousies and selfish suspicions and cruel strife shall be swallowed up by the enthusiasm of humanity, just as He gladdened Moses, at a hundred and twenty, with entrancing visions of the land of promise from Pisgah's heights, before the great champion was laid to rest on Nebo's lonely mountain! Old workers! Go on dreaming dreams! Do not surrender your visions. Dust the lens of your telescope of hope and see the glorious success that is surely coming for all true work. Be not oppressed and hindered by your own feebleness. Remember God lives and reigns. Do His work with the brilliant hopes He creates, and the undying bravery He inspires!

I. First, then, I note that Ezekiel breathes the *Spirit of the New Evangel* from the beginning to the close of his ministry, the spirit of unbending courage, iron consistency, uncompromising faithfulness, heroic self-abnegation, and living faith in God. The breath of Jehovah lifts him on to his feet. The ineffable thrill of the Divine life fills him with manly daring, makes his "forehead as an adamant, harder than flint,"* so that he faces and accepts in his inmost being the unspeakable bitterness of the communications he has to deliver, and bears without repining the pressure of an overwhelmingly sorrowful work for the disobedient and obdurate house of Israel.† As an artist-prophet, his fancy stimulated by his new surroundings, he cuts his pictures into clay-tiles, bakes them, and

* "As a diamond that is harder than stone I make thy forehead," Ewald's *Ezekiel.*

† Ezekiel ii. 9; iii. 8.

shows them as signs of the irresistible doom of Israel.* By parables and visions, by acted dramas of immense length and acute painfulness, attended with violent shocks and prolonged oppressions, he traces the swift approach of the eternal vengeance to the rebellious people.† Even the death of his tenderly-beloved wife, in a strange land, and amidst the bitterness of his tasks, is not suffered to make more than a momentary break in the severe continuity of his faithful and strenuous work. Smitten down as by a bolt of lightning, he felt it hard, indeed,

> "To stay behind, alone, when his *one star*
> Was quenched for ever."
> "Morn or eve," said he, "shall bring
> No word of thee to me, and days and nights
> Shall make one empty night."

But his vocation made him victorious over sorrow, and in the obligations of an urgent and insistent work he triumphed over the loss of "the desire of his eyes," for he held that

> "In the work of God
> No man may turn or falter. I am His,
> Not mine, not *hers*; I dare not weep for her
> When God hath need of me. I dare not mourn
> The while I speak His Word, for no weak tears
> May fall upon the sacred fire; no sound
> Of breaking human heart may mar the full
> Majestic music of a prophet's voice,
> Speaking to all the ages from the mount
> Of cloud and vision. Thus I spake for God

* Ezekiel iv. 1-3.
† Ezekiel iv. 4; v., &c., &c.

And did not falter, rather did my soul
Wax stronger as it overcame."*

Fortified by these consolations, he stood on the watch-tower of the captive people's life as a look-out man, keen in his observation, true in his interpretation of the signs of the times, fearless in his rebukes, blowing his war-horn with distinct and resonant sound, as though he felt the safety of the whole people rested upon him.† Content with the consciousness of fidelity to his high calling he made no further demands. Duty done was his satisfaction and reward. It was not for him to complain that he was neglected, cast out, despised, and persecuted. For what was he a prophet at all if he could not endure such things? Why had he received his revelation of light and truth if he were unready to suffer whatever was necessary to make it known to men? God's Evangelists must be martyrs. The conscious possession of a gospel for men is the true inspiration to fearlessness, defiance of wrong and falsehood and hypocrisy, calm and inflexible zeal in work. The real prophet of his age reckons with calumny, mis-representation, neglect, and poverty. Livingstone carries in his New Testament the food on which martyrs are nourished. Savonarola is fortified for death by the vision of the future of Florence which grows out of the good tidings he preaches. Paul and Barnabas can readily hazard their lives as missionaries because they know they are conveying the unsearchable riches of Christ. Did we know our Gospel better; had we a clearer insight into its energies; were we ourselves conscious of its infinite and

* *Ezekiel*, by B. M., pp. 16-20.
† Ezekiel iii. 16-21; xxxiii.

effective applications to human need, we should not lack fire in preaching it, nor pule and whine because a world that neither knows it nor its prophets gives us scant fare, a low place, and a poor reward. Only he who is conscious that he is preaching THE Gospel for his age can really play the martyr-hero.

II. Let us advance to the fact that the Gospel of the Exile is incarnate in Ezekiel as to its *method*, as well as in its new and conquering spirit. There is a penetrating thoroughness characteristic of the life of the time, and of the particular experience through which Israel is passing; a going to the root of individual and national mischief; a searching of heart, an arousal of conscience, an insistence on the doctrine of individual responsibility; a forcing of men face to face with eternal and irresistible Divine laws—all essential to the successful proclamation of a true evangel for sinning men.

(1) The prophet's first word anticipates that of John the Baptist, and of our Lord, "Repent ye, repent ye. God is at hand. His rule is real, though invisible. His kingdom is coming, though you do not see it. Repent, and repent at once." His chief work is to disabuse their minds of all infatuated and delusive hopes as to the speedy termination of their sufferings, and of the swift arrival of help from Egypt, and show the total falseness of the gilded promises of deliverance made by self-interested and sordid prophets and prophetesses, who were crying, "Peace, peace," and building up a protecting wall of falsehoods and daubing it over with their untempered fervours, but which would surely tumble down, to the ruin of those who patched it up, and of all

who sought shelter near it. With an energy of language, and a vigour of epithet, and a vehemence of spirit, that could neither be mistaken nor resisted, he rebuked the sins of this house of disobedience, exposed its hollow sophistries and self-delusions, and bade it cast away its transgressions, and make itself a new heart and a new spirit.

(2) Nor does he rest till he has dug up the very roots of their false and fatal wrong-doing, and laid bare to the glare of the light of day the real cause of all their sin. They are *fatalists*. In their self-righteousness and love of ease they have invented and defined in a proverb a theory of their calamities which drugs the conscience, kills the will, and destroys the soul. "Our fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." It's all a matter of "heredity" and "environment." We do not suffer for our own sins, but for the sins of our progenitors. It is fate, and not our act, that fills our cup with bitterness, our hearts with sorrows, and our homes with shame. Our fathers were delivered to do all these abominations, and we have to pay the price of their iniquities. "They ate the grapes and we have the misery."

Ezekiel met this fixed iron fatalism of the people with the all-encompassing and indefeasible doctrine of the personal responsibility of each man for his own sin; as distinct from the distorted notion of inherited and transmitted guilt and suffering, they were proclaiming. "God says," he told them, "behold, all souls are Mine;" each is of equal and independent value; as the soul of the father, so is the soul of the son; the soul that sinneth *it* shall die—*it*, and not another for it; *it* alone, and only for its

own conscious and inward wrong. Every man is a unit, an integer needing no fraction from the present, or past, or future, to complete his being. His responsibility is personal, exclusive, individual, and entire. Each soul of man dwells in the awful solitude of its individual obligation to God. "Teeth set on edge" are not signs of personal sin; suffering is no proof of personal wrong, and is not "death." It is sin that kills, and sin is and must be of personal will and individual intelligence. No man sins for another; no man dies for another. God's ways are all equal, and righteousness is the glory of His administration. Heredity is a fact; but it neither accounts for the sum of human suffering, nor for the presence of individual sin. The grape theory may fill a proverb, but it will not explain the Exile

Unspeakably strange, is it not, that the fascinating and ever-welcome error of these captives should have found a distinguished expositor and defender in our own day in Professor Henry Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*;—a book of captivating beauty of style, marvellous opulence of illustration, but saturated with the mischievous and deadly error of fatalism. Yet this is the painful fact. What else can be the meaning of such assertions, repeated and illustrated at great length, as that man is "spiritually inorganic;" is "as a crystal to an organism," "a mineral" in relation to the higher and spiritual life, and as incapable of stretching towards that life as the stone in the gravel-path is of becoming a blooming and beautiful rose! What else is the significance of the assertion "of the powerlessness of the human will," and that "Biography is simply a branch of Natural History," and that the "teeth being on edge" is

simply the "resultant" of a man's "ancestry and surroundings!"

It does not need a Professor Drummond to induce men to give place to such pleasant and blinding delusions as these! They grow in the human mind with the incalculable abundance and immeasurable rapidity of the infinitesimal germs in a process of fermentation. We delight in any theory that gets rid of the personal will as the chief factor in life. We seize with insatiable greed the dogma that rids us of the sense of personal wrong, and enables us to fling the blame of our miseries and defeats on a bad "environment," a "diseased liver," a melancholy temperament, the fact of our being precluded from the exercise of the privilege of choosing our ancestors. We chafe and fret under the sense of personal wrong-doing, and rejoice in the glad tidings that we are "spiritually inorganic," and "as the minerals" to all spiritual obligations, free to add sin to sin, unobstructed by a protesting conscience, and unhindered by any apprehension of deserved punishment! Isn't it the last thing we do this self-accusation? Are we not saying to ourselves morning, noon, and night, "It is not my fault, it is my misfortune that I am thus, and thus." My "circumstances" are against me. I cannot be good in a world like this, with the din of blasphemy in my ears, and the seductions of evil at every turn; my body was made with these passions, I did not make it myself; I must gratify them; this evil is inherited. Those guilty ancestors ate the grapes when they were sour, hence all this wretchedness and misery!

Did Ezekiel endorse that? Endorse it! He rebuked

it and exposed it with all his might. "Cast away," he exclaimed—"Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; *Make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel.*" The captives were not "spiritually inorganic," "dead as minerals;" "powerless in will," they were destroying themselves, and he bade them halt and turn, and open their hearts to tender human sympathies, to cleansing sorrows, and to new aspirations.

This was not an accidental utterance in his ministry: it is its essence and power; heard in various tones, sometimes as a rushing mighty wind, and sometimes as the gentle and consoling whisper of a kind nurse to the sick and weary; but always heard. Indeed, it is the basis and groundwork of all Gospel ministry, and on the very day of the descending fulness of the world-renewing spirit, is heard above every other appeal from the lips of Peter: "Repent and TURN AGAIN"; [not repent and *be converted*, as if they could not stretch up to the life that was above them] but, "turn again" to the pardon that is offered to you, to the life and love that seek you; turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Believe me, we shall be much safer, and are likely to be much stronger if we stedfastly and even fiercely resist any dogma that dwarfs the capital fact of human responsibility and dulls the sense of our personal obligation to live at every moment, and in every place, and under every circumstance, the highest and holiest life. I feel that I have no worse foe, no more subtle and successful Satan than that

theory which flings me back on my "temperament" or my "circumstances," to account for the weaknesses of my character, the defects of my service, and the sins of my life. There is only one safe attitude for me towards it, that of an indignant and resolute "Get thee behind me Satan! thou savourest the things that be of men, and not the things that be of God."

"Heredity" and "Environment" do not lessen the *actual* responsibility of a single soul. They account for temperamental differences and difficulties: explain the greater or less strength of the obstacles to be faced and mastered; assist in determining the quantity of credit really due to an individual for any particular work, show the reasons why, what is easy to one is enormously difficult to another, and are the cause of some of the suffering and misery in the human lot. But the real duty of the individual to God and to his fellow remains intact, springs out of his spiritual relations and powers, and binds him to be and do the highest and best possible to him, where he is and as he is. The man is not made by his "environment" or his ancestry ~~after all~~. He makes himself. Guilt *must* be his own. He is an individual; he knows it, he feels it, and in his best and noblest moods he looks on the doctrine that he is a "mineral," "spiritually inorganic," the helpless slave of his body and bias, with ineffable scorn. The lesson of the Exile is not lost. The emergence of the individual man in his wholeness is completed. Man as distinct from the homestead, the family, the tribe, the nation, the race, appears with great distinctness in the penitent prayers of David, "Against Thee have I sinned;" and the experiences of the Captivity developed that sense

of the dignity and value of the personal soul, which in the Christianity of Christ is exhibited in all its fulness and glory.

Nor can we forget that "heredity" has two sides. For whose child am I? Have you explained me when you have traced my genealogy back one or two generations? By no means! You must go much further and deeper; back even to the divine root of the human race. Man is the son of Adam, and "Adam is the son of God." "We are all His offspring." Is it likely, think you, there is no inheritance from the Father of spirits, the God of Holiness; no spark of the Divine in us, nothing to vindicate the great saying of the Psalmist: "Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour."*

(3) Most strenuously and pathetically did the prophet battle with this fatalistic conception of life, not only because it took the manhood out of man, but also because it took the Godhood out of God; and made all wrong, suffering, and death, due to His creative acts. Practically it asserted that it was His pleasure that the unrighteous should die. "As truly as I live" saith Jehovah, in the

* "The door," says Professor Drummond, "from the inorganic to the organic is shut and no mineral can open it; so the door from the natural to the spiritual is shut and no man can open it." Man is *dead* in trespass. It is the every-day fallacy of building an argument on a trope, and constructing a system of thought out of a metaphor. It ought not to be necessary to do more than meet these figures of speech with the plain and direct assertion of the Infallible Christ, "Ye *will* not come to Me that ye may have life." Fortunately for his readers Professor Drummond is extremely inconsistent, and so the metaphorical fallacies of "Biogenesis" are combatted by the illustrations of "Degeneration" For he blames men for "losing their spiritual faculties and reverting to a lower condition."

most solemn and emphatic manner possible, "No! I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. . . . I shrink from it, I am averse to it, I delight in mercy My joy is in forgiveness and renewal. Nothing could be more false and unworthy—'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.'"

The ways of God are not only "equal," but His disposition is merciful. The soul that sins dies, not because He utters a sentence of death and inflicts a positive punishment, but by and from the very nature of sin, and in consequence of the ordinary and necessary processes of a well and wisely-ordered world. The "Death" of a man or a nation is not from a divine fiat, and due to the issue of an irresistible edict; it is the inevitable outcome of conscious and intelligent acts on the part of men and nations, and is directly and immediately due to their choice of deeds in a world formed for the perpetuity and eternal reproductiveness of goodness and the sure, if slow, decay and disappearance of wrong. God is love, love of righteousness which is man's highest and most enduring welfare, and therefore,

"No action whether foul or fair,
Is ever done, but it leaves somewhere
A record, written by fingers ghostly
As a blessing, or a curse, and mostly
In the greater weakness or greater strength
Of the acts which follow it, till at length
The wrongs of ages are redressed
And the justice of God made manifest."

III. This brings us to the final feature of this Incarna-

tion, viz., that Ezekiel could not have adopted so rigorous and searching a method unless he had been bathed and inspired by the great evangelical *Motive*. If you probe a wound and add shocks of pain and agony to a sufferer, it must be because you carry with you an available and effective remedy. If you dare to drive home this doctrine of personal and undivided responsibility for sin and guilt, it must be because you have authority to proclaim an "atonement," to guarantee renewing power, and to promise the access of complete moral and spiritual health. The motive to Ezekiel's ministry is the loving, omnipotent, and regenerating God.

1. As the idea of sin bulges more and more in the thought of the Jews, and burns with increased fierceness in their consciences, fed by the sufferings of their nation, so with unprecedented sharpness of outline, appears "the wiping out" of guilt by the free, sovereign, and love-prompted grace of God. The deepening of the sense of sin by prophetic warning and rebuke on the one hand, and the gaping wounds of captive Judah on the other, forces the momentous problem of God's forgiveness on their attention, and, in psalm and hymn, prophecy and appeal, in the book of Isaiah and the book of Job, as well as in Ezekiel, Jehovah appears blotting out Israel's transgression, sprinkling the cleansing water, bearing the sins of the people, for His own name's sake, and out of His own pure, unpropitiated, unprompted, and unsolicited love.* Men

* "The true basis of forgiveness in the Old Testament, as in the New, lies, not in man's offering, but in a work of sovereign love." Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 381-2. *Cf.* Ezekiel xxxvi. 22, &c.

who cannot point to the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world, will be likely to speak with "bated breath and whispering humbleness" about the guilt of their fellows, to utter soft speeches and speak smooth words concerning bad motives, cowardly self-excusings, capricious enthusiasms, and guilty despairs. We must have a full and free and frank "atonement for all the sins of all men" if we are to deal faithfully with iniquity, and lift into the plenitude of power the sense of undiminished responsibility to God.

(2) But it is in the inspiration of *hope* in the Almighty power of God that Ezekiel soars to the highest ranges, and beholds his most memorable and gladdening vision. Carried in thought to his "Mount of Transfiguration," Tel-Abib, he sees covering the vast acres of the far-stretching plain the wreck as of an immense army, of dry, bleached, and withering bones. He muses, and the fire of thought burns, and the voice of God sounds in the lonely chambers of his soul.

"Son of man, can these bones live again?"

For him the problem is insoluble, and he says, "O Lord, Thou knowest."

Again the voice speaks. "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, 'Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord, behold I bring spirit upon you that ye may live again. I will put sinews upon you, and bring upon you flesh and cover you with skin, and then put my spirit into you that ye may live and know that I am the Lord.'"

Obedient to the heavenly summons, he spake, and at once there was a noise as of a long and low peal of thunder, and all along the plain there was a

movement, bone finding out its mate-bone, and each getting into its appropriate place; and then came the sinew and the flesh, and finally the all-investing skin, so that the scattered "dry bones" are all re-constituted bodies of flesh. But they are *bodies* only. There is no spirit in them. Will not God finish His work then?

The willing minister waits, and a voice says, "Call, O son of man, to the breath of life that fills the world, and say, 'Come, O breath of life, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.'"

He spake, and they stood on their feet, an exceeding great army. So the true community of Israel shall be raised by the power of God from the grave of its exile-life, filled with fresh power and energy, and go forth against its enemies to subdue all things under its feet. The omnipotence of God is the certain resurrection the soul of man. He cannot be holden of death. This last enemy shall be destroyed. Power belongeth unto God, and He uses it to *save* prostrate, despondent, and despairing souls, convicted of guilt, oppressed with the consciousness of death! His delight is in renewal as well as in mercy! He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. No despairs are beyond the sweep of His power; hope in Jehovah! O! son of man, He is the health of thy countenance: for He is *thy* God.

(3) Nor is this a fitful and passing access of power, standing out in life like a mountain peak in a plain, a sad memorial of a delightful past, and prophecy of an impossible future; a record of privilege never again to be enjoyed. No; for "I will," says God, "take away the hard, insensitive, unsympathetic, and selfish heart of

stone, and will give you a heart of flesh, tender, responsive to the touch of all that surrounds it, open to the Divine emotion of reverence and pity, love and aspiration; and I will put My spirit within you, and write My laws on your heart, enrich you with personal communion, and nourish you by a true obedience." O blessed Gospel! O cheering Pentecost of the Exile! How the hearts of the lowly and penitent in Israel leapt to hail thy coming, rejoiced in the fulness of the blessing of faith, hope, and fellowship with the Eternal! and prepared for the world-saving mission to which God had called them.

"World-saving"—for this message of Ezekiel's was a universal gospel, an authentic assurance for all time that any individual or nation that does not despair of God and of His Spirit, of His pure love and omnipotence, will not be, and *cannot* be, forsaken of the Divine Spirit in any situation, however acute the suffering and overwhelming the foes and hopeless the circumstances, but will be borne forward into newness of life. A Pentecost is certain. The Redeemer lives, and the most desolate have in Him a friend, and the most lost and dead a Saviour and Regenerator.

Someone sends a letter, I know not whom, asking our prayers to-day, saying that since the last Mission the idea "that her sins are too dreadful to be forgiven has pursued her day and night"; and in terms of deepest pathos she pleads for our sympathy and supplications. Dear friend! see, even in this thy request thou hast faith and hope in us men and women, and in our prayers to the Father; wilt thou not believe more in God than in us, in His tender love, His free pardon, His plentiful power to heal and save? Sister, rest thyself on His love! See it in Jesus,

His son, and rejoice in it as His pledge that He forgives, He saves, He gives the "new spirit," and He never, no, never forsakes!

Dare any one doubt the wide sweep of Ezekiel's Gospel, and question the exhaustless sources of strength upon which he drew for his painful and prolonged ministry? Lift up your eyes, and look abroad over the world of that century of the exile, and read that God is no respector of persons, but in every nation those that need Him hear His voice, and those that seek Him surely find Him. In far-off China, *Confucius*, born just at the middle of the sixth century before Christ, is telling them that the way to heaven is to bless the good and make the bad miserable, that calamities were sent to make manifest guilt, and that man's duties are to his family, himself, and his nation. In the same century, and at the same time, *Laotzse* is teaching the existence of an Infinite Spiritual Essence manifest in the universe in power and wisdom. In India, *Buddha* is wakening thought by his grand self-denials, and directing the spirits of men by his lofty teachings. Zoroastrianism enters on a new and more energetic life in *Persia*, and their Bible, or Zendavesta gives it a literary and abiding form. The Seven Wise Men, led by Thales and Solon, are the "Prophets" of Greece, Pythagoras is exhorting his disciples not to retire to rest till they have diligently and faithfully conversed with their consciences concerning the activities of the day, and *Servius Tullius*, in Rome, is inculcating veneration for the law of the State, and practising a severe morality. That Sixth Century B.C. was a great epoch in the history of religion. The Spirit of God was brooding over the human waste, and

preparing, by means of these leaders in different lands, and in different ways, the way for the Revelation of the Founder of the Spiritual Religion of Christianity. The God and Father of all the families of the earth was sending "good news," not only by Ezekiel to the captives of Babylon, but by Confucius, Laotzse, Buddha, and Pythagoras, to His many and needy children; for He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of His truth.*

Who then will hesitate to preach God's last, perfect, and universal Gospel to his fellow-man? Who will not seek for the strength which comes (1) from a new and full life, a heart quick in sympathy and strong in the Spirit—(2) from the conviction that we are living in a world of persons spiritually related to the Father, and immediately responsible to His judgment—and (3) from the assurance that the love of God is a real gospel for each human soul—so that he may proclaim the faithful saying, that God is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe? Behind many a bright and sunny face there is an aching heart, and the gnawing of despair! Can't you, won't you tell the good news of forgiveness? In many lives there are disorder and weakness and disease they do not understand and see not how to remove. Can't you, won't you, tell of the healing balm, the infinite strength, the harmonizing God? To numberless souls life is a captivity, an exile from the worship of God, and the joy of purity and service,

* *A Comparative History of Religions*, J. C. Moffatt, D D., vol. ii., 226, 260; *The Evidences of Natural Religion*, by Charles McArthur 6-7, 79, 143.; *Chips from a German Workshop*, Prof. Max Müller, iii. 508, iv. 179, iv. 262.

and a wearisome and oppressive warfare. Can't you, won't you, show that sorrow is the seed of joy, that difficulty is the nourishment of manhood, and that the loving and Omnipotent God waits to infuse that new Spirit into us; which making us new, puts us into a new world, and gives us a NEW ETERNITY?

'THE drama of Job, notwithstanding its simplicity, surpasses all the early Greek tragedies in nobility of conception and depth of feeling, just as the true revelation and religion of this (Hebrew) Nation are superior to those of the Greeks." EWALD.—*Revelation*, 310.

"Lord, let me rest rememb'ring this,
That Thou art God alone;
'Tis not for me to rule the powers
That circle round Thy throne;
'Tis not for me to guide the spheres,
The world, and worlds unknown.

"Teach me that helplessness is strength,
United to Thy might;
That some may see Thy glories best
In sorrow's darkest night;
That we must pass the land of shades
To reach the land of light."

HUBERT BOWER.

Man in the Hands of Satan.

"And the Lord said unto Satan, behold he is in thine hand; only spare his life."—*Job* ii. 6.

Frank Buckland (whose biography has just appeared) gives utterance as he lies suffering and dying, to his pain, perplexity, and patience, when, with touching pathos and subdued cheerfulness, he compares himself, as thousands of weary souls have done before him, to "poor old Job;" that historic figure comes to him, from the dim past, as it has done to many of us in our sadder times, with the distinctness of breathing and friendly reality, and forming the most apt and familiar image of the soul of man passing through the God-ordained crises of affliction and temptation, incident to our final separation from this earth.

So Job has held, and still holds, a unique place as the representative sufferer of the human race. This hero of meekness, all but overwhelmed with blank hopelessness, paralyzed in the inmost nerve of his life, isolated from all that makes living bright and precious, and left, to all human seeming, absolutely helpless in the hands of a slandering and malignant fate, has so burnt his story into the imagination of mankind, that it will never disappear so

long as hearts are crushed by the wheels of care and souls are bruised by the blows of temptation.

Our Old Testament has no more vital element. Whatever part of these ancient writings may be shorn of their charms by the sharp scissors of modern criticism, or fail to compel the homage of busy and preoccupied man, this book never can lose a line of its beauty or be robbed of a grain of its power. Men may debate the present-day uses of ritualistic *Leviticus*, puzzle themselves in finding a place in the education of the world for the *Song of Solomon*, neglect *Ezekiel* and the "lesser prophets;" but troubled and tempted men will always find an easy way to the land of Uz; soothe their souls, clear their vision, and feed their faith in God and right, by listening to the haughty and passionate talk of Zophar, the bald and bare commonplaces of Bildad, the pathetic and occasionally elevated speech of Eliphaz, the sparkling thought and super-saturated conceit of Elihu, and the struggling but victorious confidence of Job; now loud and vehement as the blast of a hurrying storm; now low and plaintive as the cry of a suffering child; often petulant and painfilled; sometimes original and sublime; and always strong in its sincerity, charming in its frankness, and helpful in its reality. Even the representative "Servant of Jehovah," whose significant and mysterious form fills the second part of the Book of Isaiah, and with whom the experience of Job so closely corresponds, has no more indestructible elements; nay more, not even the full and vivid realization of that prophetic forecast, presented in the sufferings of "the Man of Sorrows," Christ Jesus, will ever displace "poor old Job" in the affections of the groaning

and travailing generations of mankind. Alone and unrivalled he fills the vision, and will continue to do so as long as sun and moon endure. The splendour and magnificence of the victories of the tempted and crucified Christ—His unparalleled exaltation in the heart and history of men, have so overlaid and pushed out of sight the sufferings of that one life which approximates more closely than any other to, and at points far surpasses Job's, that we may well believe neither the widest research nor the most fertile fancy will ever displace him as the ideal Sufferer. So that—and surely this follows at once—if God in his love and grace and strength suffices for Job, and for Job when he is in the hands of Satan, to do with him as he will, save only that he shall not cut the trembling thread of his life, then He suffices for anybody and everybody, at any time and for evermore.

II. But stay, say you, "tell us at the threshold, is this story of Job sober fact or only flighty fiction, actual history or only imaginative poetry? Is there a real man in the hands of a real devil, and sustained and made victorious by a real God, or have we nothing more substantial than fibrous figures woven into a beautiful tapestry by the deft fingers of a nimble fancy?"

No doubt the Book of Job forms as real a part of the Old Testament as the Five Books of Psalms, the Song of Deborah, or the Prayer of Moses, the man of God; and our recent Revisers have made this apparent in their Version, as far as they could, by setting out the conversations between Job and his friends with metrical regularity and musical cadence.

Moreover, every reader feels that though the writer starts on the hard and solid earth, amid the realities of domestic festivity, patriarchal sacrifice, and the over-flowing plenty of a wealthy Eastern farmer, he swiftly ascends into the Court of Heaven, there hears and then reports a colloquy between God and Satan; and though he returns again to earth and faces the raging and destructive fire, the cruel and sudden Oriental raid, and the bellowing simoon, he is suddenly carried aloft once more and witnesses a second scene in the sanctuary of God, whether in the body or out of the body he does not tell; but when again he appears it is to report in language of winning beauty and rhythmical sweetness, first, the lamentations of Job over his unequalled and indescribable disasters, and next, the irritating and vexatious attacks of Job's three friends. In fact he moves almost wholly in the poetical realm; and it is not till the voice of Jehovah has been heard in the whirlwind, re-awakening penitence and quickening faith, that he dips his pen in plain prose anew to narrate the return of long lost health, a smiling prosperity, and a domestic delight to the much-afflicted man. So the conviction settles in our minds that the thought and fact of this book are cast into the mould of a drama as real as that of Agamemnon; a tragedy far surpassing Othello; or an "epic" * sublimer than the

* Godet, *Biblical Studies, Old Testament*, p. 195. "The action of the story develops itself much more under the form of an epic. The point on which it turns is not indeed the possession of a captive, as in the Iliad; but the conquest of the truth upon a vital point of Monotheism." G. H. Bateson Wright, on *Job*, says, "The book of Job is a dramatic writing," and adds, "Tennyson's 'Two Voices' is much indebted to it, as also parts of *In Memoriam*." But Ewald reminds us that "the drama includes within it, not only lyric, but also epic poetry."—*Job*, p. 17.

immortal Iliad of Homer: a drama intended not for the eye of sense but for the eye of the mind; a tragedy in which the hero "wades through mires of deep suffering and enigma," but maintains an unshaken consciousness of his innocence before the decree, which crushes him like fate; an "epic" leaving far away out of sight the classical products of all lands, in sublimity of conception, depth of pathos, opulence of power, and clearness and fulness of revelation.

But admitting the poetical *form* of this book we must then ask whether all our highest poetry does not rest on the immutable basis of fact. Is not *In Memoriam* the many-voiced and pathetic lament of a real anguish over actual separation from a tenderly-loved and dear friend? Did not George Eliot find the germ of her *Spanish Gypsy*, in her own adventures in childhood, amongst the gypsies of Warwickshire, and had she not to dwell in Spain before she could give appropriate "body" and fitting speech to Zarca and Fedalma? Is not the immortal Dinah Morris, the fair Methodist preacher, with her yearning pity over lost souls, her high-strung enthusiasm to pluck them as brands from the burning, an idealized drawing from life? No doubt! And even if this were not so, yet the verdict of Ewald (whom we always quote as one of the highest authorities in the exposition of Israel's history, and recognize as one of the chief gifts of God to this century) disposes of the question, when he says, "An entire invention either of a person or of a history purely from the brain of a poet, is a thing wholly unknown in the earlier antiquity of all nations," so that the basis of this book is solid fact, the real experiences of a suffering soul, given over

by God into the hands of Satan, absolutely and wholly, with the one solitary and ghastly limitation that his life is not to be cut short. "Behold he is in thine hand ; only spare his life." The history is actual ; and not a wit less so because the *form* of the story is ideal and dramatic.

III. Yet we are bound to remember that the unequalled and imperishable value of this book does not depend upon its form as literature, or even on its factual character as history. The question of questions is not ; is it a plain prosaic chronicle or a winning poem ? Not even, did such a man as Job live and fight and win in the land of Uz ? But are the truths his story embodies and illumines eternal, and universal, and do the ideas set forth concerning God and man, evil and good, go to the root of things, and expound the essential nature of our human life ? That is the all-important question. The final founts of force in men and books alike are the *ideas* they contain and convey ; and, therefore, the supreme enquiry is not, is Arthur Henry Hallam a poetical creation, vague, shadowy, and nebulous as a dream, but are the ideas of *In Memoriam* concerning the character of God, the progress of man through suffering, the victory of love and life over hate and death, true or false ? Are they fact ? It matters little whether Zophar and Bildad are veritable persons ; the question is do they help in the final vanquishing of the false conceptions of God they themselves cherish and make more available and inspiring the purer and larger idea of the Eternal that triumphs in the mind and heart of Job ! The one thing urgent for us to know now is, not *was* there a Job, but *is* there a light from God in the history of Job that guides

the reason and conscience, and "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good?" Does Job teach us how to live the best life, and cling with inviolable tenacity to God, not in Uz but in London; not in the 20th or 6th Century B.C., but in this nineteenth? Does he inform us, not about ancient mining or Eastern astronomy, but concerning the fortunes of exceptionally good men in the hands of the devil? What in short are his answers to such perennial questions of the world's "aged sorrow" as these? Is God greater than evil? Can He subdue it and will He? When a man is in the hands of Satan, a helpless victim, bound hand and foot with the knotted cords of disease, without a friend on earth, his very existence an intolerable and agonizing pain, worse than a death in life—must he give in to the devil and do his will as a poor slave, or will strength enough reach him from God to keep him true and faithful to the last gasp of his life?

IV. A glance at the prologue of this poem is enough to convince us that the book is expressly written to solve these deep and perplexing problems of the mind; not so much by the aid of a devout and humble submission to infinite and resistless power, like that of Eli; but in the full glare of an interrogating and inexorable *Reason*. Poem though it be in form, its exhaustless fascination is its philosophy. Like Milton's great classic it is a defence of the ways of God to men; a bold facing of plausible but false interpretations of life and destiny; a thorough and tremorless exposure of their inherent absurdity and unreason, and an unfaltering vindication of the character of God from all the aspersions of lazily-thinking Zophars, parrot-like Bildads, and fatalistic Elihus.

Great and lasting are the blessings which crown a "simple faith" and an "unreasoning trust," and happy myriads rejoice in their power; but all the needs of all men cannot be met by the direction "only believe"—far-reaching and much-including as it is. Closing the eyes, and accepting all that a self-asserting authority is pleased to declare, may perhaps satisfy some Romanists; but it is not more certain that it makes others into sceptics, than that the Revelation of God invites and guides to the severest analysis of facts and the most strenuous use of the reason, and satisfies the understanding as well as the heart, by giving faith a foundation, firm as the everlasting hills, in the observable nature and constitution of man, the demonstrated administration of God, and the verifications of individual and universal experience. If we are to go through the furnace and not be burnt, to bear suffering and not wince, to persist in duty, Luther-like, though there are as many devils against us as tiles on the housetops of a city; our faith must stand not on the assertions of men, but in the wisdom and power and love of God as revealed in scattered portions in the long history of mankind, and cleansed and focussed in the life and work of His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

In that Revelation the Book of Job holds a unique place; as the sign and precursor, by I know not how long a period, of the wonderful uprising of the human reason to grasp God, to solve the problem of human suffering, to reconcile the conflicting facts of experience, which wa characteristic of the life, not only of Palestine and Babylon but of the world, in that restive, yearning, and aspiring sixth century B.C. In China and in India, in Greece and

Rome, in Persia and by the river Chebar, the sigh of the human heart was, "O! that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat. I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." But the swiftly occurring and recurring alarm was—"Would He, the Great, Strong, Omnipotent God, *contend against me in the greatness of His power?* On which side would He stand? Should I find Him friend or foe, a Redeemer or a Destroyer?" And only a few here and there were able to say with the distinct authority of pure reason, and the convincing energy of the Spirit of God, "Nay; but He would give heed unto me, for He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." *

And this answer is given not as in a Jew's book, and for a righteous Israelite; but in what Carlyle calls an "all men's book," so glorious is its breadth, so intense and glowing its humanism, so completely is it freed from all traces of mere nationalism. It is indeed *in* Hebrew literature, but so little *of* it, that some have even doubted (though without reason) its Hebrew origin. "It is the pure grain with the husk of nationality stripped off." It contains no trace of Moses, no note of the father of the faithful, the hero Joseph, Samson, or the Judges. We do not hear the "Ten Words" of Sinai, the ritual of Leviticus, or even of sacrifice, save in the forms common to most countries. Man and God, the soul in fierce and deadly battle with evil, fill and crowd every scene of the thrilling drama. The whole representation leaves the hills and plains of Palestine, and bases itself on the broad stones of

* Job xxiii. 3. 6. 10.

universal reason. It is not a poem for the solitary Jew, but a message for man as man, all the world over, and through all the ages of time.

V. This is palpable and unquestionable as soon as the *Special Motive* for Job's fierce trial is seen. The perfect man—who hates evil, and loves right, is left in the hands of Satan by God; and Satan is told that he may do what he pleases with him, only he must spare his life. The permission has no other limit; and the fierce malignity of the devil may be trusted to go as close to the boundary as he can get. But wherefore this permission at all? For what reason does God part with His servant out of His power? On what pivot does the whole book turn?

(1) First, you note there is not the fragment of a line to prove that the sudden loss of the means of living, or the loathsome and offensive disease which overweights his body spring from a violated law. *He is not suffering for his sins.* A man of his heroic mould consciously breaking the laws of God would pay the price of his wrong-doing at once, and not wince.

(2) Nor is it a case of the ancestral "eating of sour grapes," and suffering the deserved, but unspent, penalties of family sins.

(3) Nor again is Job put into the furnace of affliction in order that he may come forth as gold. He knows that blessed issue will follow; and the anticipation of spiritual cleansing and enlargement sustains and fortifies him; but the infirmities of the hero are not the occasion of the trial. On the contrary he is elected for this severe experience because of his *exceptional goodness*, his out-shining integrity,

his splendid hate of evil, his magnificent generosity. "There is none like him on the earth." He is the typical religious man; and yet the man who with "the best meaning has incurred the worst," to whom existence is a curse, providence a chaos, life an aceldama, and annihilation a gospel.

(4) Add to this the fact that his affliction is not the apprenticeship of a strong nature to the educational influences of sorrow and temptation, so that learning obedience by the things he suffers, he may be qualified to contribute in ampler measures to the welfare of men. No doubt he will acquire wisdom and gifts in the Divine School of suffering, but the chief reason for his accumulated and crucial sorrows must be found somewhere else than in the peaceable fruits of righteousness that follow his patient and heroic endurance of chastisement.

(5) Where then is it? What is the special motive for this singular and significant experience! Listen to the colloquy in heaven between Satan and God concerning Job! Satan just arrived from his perfidious and malignant wanderings in search of mischief to men, is asked, "Hast thou considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth, a just and an upright man, and one that feareth God and escheweth evil." And Satan, the slanderer, said at once, "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand and touch all that he hath and he will renounce Thee." Job knows well enough what he is about, and is simply making

the best investment of his powers the market of human life offers. His eye is on "number one"; he is serving himself. He seeks perfection for the sake of a wage, and fears God that he may fill his purse. *Thou* dost not inspire pure and unselfish devotion! *Thou* canst not win the unalloyed love and unstinted homage of men!

Oh, what bitterness, what malignity, what venom against God load those sentences? How hatred of God—not of *men*—Satan does not aim first at you and me, but at God through us—how hatred against God tingles in every word he speaks, as does the tempest with the electric current! And yet who has not heard exactly such acrid scepticism concerning the reality of human goodness, and the unselfishness of human service, day after day, and night after night, concerning some of the purest and noblest souls that breathe? "Ah! he preaches for his wage!" is flung at a man who thinks no more of coins than he does of commendations; but Ezekiel-like, delivers his message though it hurl him from plenty to poverty, and from joy to misery! A human fiend whispers with concentrated poison in each tone, "*You* don't serve God for nothing; *you* understand the way to rise," to a faithful servant who will not join in the theft of his master's time, or in a circuitous, but actual, robbery of his master's gains. Hundreds there are who hush a condemning conscience, stifle the promptings of duty, and sink into sensual life by dropping into the easy and diabolical creed that all high aims have a low origin, and every noble deed a selfish spring. I have heard it suggested that the Jews exported Satan from Persia, and that if they had not known the Exile they had not known the devil. The

suggestion is as short-sighted as it is uncritical. Satan is not Persian; he is Jewish, and English, and Scotch—speaks indeed in all languages, goes amongst all peoples, is a very human, earthly, every-day presence, and so ubiquitous that there is not one of us who has not seen, or read, or heard his slanders of God and men, of life and of destiny. All the more strenuous and spiritual thinkers and seers of humanity have recognized the fearful wreck and prodigious ruin wrought by strange spiritual forces, principalities and powers; beyond us, and yet near us; invisible to us, but blighting our beauty, blinding our vision, and infecting our souls with the poison of hell. In Egypt, from of old, this Mischief, personalized as the author and finisher of evil, appears as "Set" or Typhon, the god of evil; in Chaldæa as the "Dragon" leading man into sin; in India as "the King" of the evil demons and king of the serpents; in Persia as Ahriman, the antagonist of Ormuzd; in Judæa as an "evil spirit from the Lord" first, then as "Satan," or "the Adversary," or "the "Slanderer," and later still as "the Serpent," and latest as "the Evil One," "the prince of this world," but always as the head and leader of the army of antagonism to righteousness, and truth, and goodness, and God.*

* "Now the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him."—1 Sam. xvi. 14; 1 Chron. xxi. 1; Zechariah iii. 3. "God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world; and they who are of his portion learn it." Wisdom ii. 23, 24. 1 John ii. 14. Rev. xii. 9.; xx. 2. It is not likely that the Hebrew idea of Satan remained unaffected by the residence of the Jews amongst other peoples, but no one who is conversant with the elements of the Biblical conception of Evil will ever confound it with that of the Persians on the one hand, or on the other with the gross and material superstition of unthinking minds in our own day.

Nowhere, however, is the representation of Satanic power more central or practical than in this Book of Job, where it is shown as the spirit that sneers at the very notion of sincerity, mocks and laughs at the efforts of feeble men to cling to the right and the true, scorns and assails souls that are fighting to subdue the animal and selfish within, and positively challenges the ability of God to attract the confidence and inspire the reverent and hearty devotion of men. The case is *crucial*. The test is faultless. The experiment is carried to the maximum of severity. No element of evil is omitted. It is the pattern-man of the world delivered over to the lord of misrule and wrong. It is pessimism in the superlative. "Behold! Job is in thine hand, only spare his life."*

* Speaking of the "weird sisters" of *Macbeth*, Professor Dowden says (in *Shakespeare: his Mind and Art*, p. 246): "If we must regard the entire universe as a manifestation of an unknown somewhat which lies behind it, we are compelled to admit that there is an apocalypse of power auxiliary to vice as really as there is a manifestation of virtuous energy. All venerable mythologies admit this fact. The Mephistopheles of Goethe remains as the testimony of our scientific nineteenth century upon the matter. . . . Therefore no great realist in art has hesitated to admit the existence of what theologians name Divine grace, and of what theologians name Satanic temptation. . . . Powers auxiliary to vice do exist outside ourselves, and Shakespeare was scientifically accurate in his statement of the fact. . . . Slighter and smaller natures can deprive themselves of the sense of such phenomena, but the wider and richer natures of creative artists cannot." . . . Ruskin (in the "*Queen of the Air*," 83-84,) says of the Serpent: "It is the strength of the base element that is so dreadful in the serpent; it is the very omnipotence of the earth. . . . It scarcely breathes with its one lung (the other shrivelled and abortive); it is passive to the sun and shade, and is cold or hot like a stone; yet 'it can out-climb the monkey, out-swim the fish, out-leap the zebra, out-wrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger.' It is a Divine hieroglyph of the demoniac power of 'the earth—of the entire earthly nature." Such is the serpent Iago—'that devouring gulf of evil," "more fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea." Merx, writing on Job, says, "The devil is a pessimist."

VI. There, then, is the stake! how fare the combatants? That is the question at issue. Can God hold a man true to Himself solely and exclusively by what He *is*, and not by what He gives; by His service, and not by His pay; by His character, and not by His heaven of reward? Can the Eternal retain the love and devotion of men irrespective of His gifts? Reduce Job to one solitary heart-beat, strip him of everything else; will that last heart-throb be for God, and God only?

Now see the swift changes through which Job is put. From the sunniest heights of prosperity and joy he falls, like lightning from heaven, into darkness, and loss, and death. The enemy comes in like a flood and sweeps away his oxen and asses; fire rages and burns up sheep and servants in one hot blast; his children perish in a cyclone; and yet the broken-hearted father says in the midst of his ruin, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away." It is the LORD'S doing. That extracts the sting, makes the bitter sweet, ill good, death life. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Out of the *first* experiment Job comes victorious. The devil is foiled. Job not only does not sin, but he sings—thanks be to God Who gives us Himself when He takes away our all.

But Satan returns to the attack, quarrels with the conditions he himself has suggested, and asks that a *second* trial may be made, affirming that all this acquiescence in the wisdom of God is unreal, and that if only his bone and his flesh, his own person, be attacked, he will cease from his devotion, and renounce God to His face. The combat is therefore renewed. Satan is permitted to do his worst on Job's person, and he does it with terrible suddenness

and completeness. From head to foot a loathsome disease afflicts him. Cast out from amongst men, he is actually assailed by his wife, who has lost heart and hope, saying, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Surely death is better than such a life." Still the thought of God shines like a bright sun on his desolation and gloom, and he says, "What! has it come to this? Must we dictate to God? Are we to administer our own lives? Shall we receive good at the hands of GOD and shall we not receive evil?" Again Job is victorious! The second diabolical experiment fails. His integrity cannot be reached by the way of his fortune, nor yet through his body, and not even through his wife. In all this Job sinned not. There is not much of him left, but what there is is pure and true!

But there is another weapon in the opulent armoury of evil, and to that, his last resource, Satan has recourse. If Job cannot be approached through his wealth, where so many fall, nor by a very whirlwind of pain, may he not be secured throught the *intellect*, and his integrity undermined by false conceptions of God, forced on him in his present weakness by loving friends. Seven days and seven nights "Job's three friends," with rent mantles, dust on their heads, and pity in their hearts, gazed on the afflicted man, not speaking a word all the time, for they saw that his grief was very great. "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day." His suffering was greater than he could bear. He must speak. He is weary with forbearing, and cannot stay any longer. He moans and groans, and heaves to and fro in his anguish, and wishes that he could die. His friends now begin to pelt his bruised and exhausted spirit with the hard stones of orthodoxy,

tell him that a bad fortune is a sign of a bad heart, that God follows good-doing with His immediate benediction, and that, notwithstanding his wide reputation for sanctity, he is only a cleverly-disguised hypocrite found out at last. Writhing from successive shocks of batteries of pain, and tortured by their attacks, he pours out upon them the vials of his sarcasm, maintains his consciousness of uprightness, and hurls back upon them their false readings of God and life. Still there is not a word against GOD HIMSELF. He has been taken in the toils of the enemy, and writhes and tosses himself in his pain, but he never loses his grip of God. There is the utmost self-renunciation, and a steadfast climbing God-ward to the end.

So a *third* time Job is victorious. The final experiment, subtlest of all, fails utterly. The pay goes and still he serves. The blessing changes into a curse, and still he loves. Life itself is one agony, but that agony is a cry to God, "My God, MY God." He loses everything and would like to lose life itself, but not even death and the grave prevent his exclaiming—yet from my flesh shall I see God, my Redeemer and Vindicator.

VII. Thus the false and diabolical conception of God is beaten off the field and the idea remains triumphant that God is lovable in Himself, and for Himself, and irrespective of the plenty of His providence, and the bounty of His reign, yea more, He is lovable, notwithstanding fearful evils in our lot and in our world. Disinterested love of the Eternal is its own reward. Love of the All-pure and All-perfect is a sufficient heaven for the soul God has made for Himself, and fills with Himself. *Reason* itself is

kingliest when it enthrones worship and adores God, the All-Holy, the All-Good, the All-Beautiful. Francis Xavier caught the spirit of this poem, and fixes in aptest language its luminous idea when he says,

"My God, I love Thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby;
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou did'st me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me did'st bear the nail and spear,
And manifold disgrace;

And griefs, and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony;
E'en death itself,—and all for one
Who was Thine enemy.

Then why, O blessèd Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Nor seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast lovèd me,
O ever-loving Lord!"

The student Timanthes produced, as he thought, his master-piece, and felt so charmed with his work that he lingered over it in fond admiration, neglected his studies, and felt more and more that he never could surpass that one achievement. His master noticed this grave and fatal

error, and taking his brush, erased the picture overnight. Timanthes, entering his studio next morning to feast his soul once more on his work, was startled at the ghastly canvas, broke first into tears and then into anger, and, approaching his master, asked what it meant. "I perceived," he responded, "that the picture was your ruin, and, therefore, I have blotted it out with wise deliberation." "How so?" said the student. "Beloved," replied the master, with pathos in his tone, "you did not love the art in your picture, but yourself. Do not grieve. Begin again. Greatness must be in you before you are able to put it on canvas." Full of confidence in his teacher and assured of his love and wisdom he took up the brush and executed his grand work, "The Immolation of Iphigenia." His knowledge of his master's character and judgment fed his faith and love, and became his strength and conquest in that severe trial.

Have you not heard a little fellow in the frenzy of a thwarted purpose, and the disappointment of a prostrate hope, exclaim in wrath, "You don't love me, Pa; I am sure you don't, or you'd let me go?" Not yet has he apprehended the true character of his father, nor felt the force of his affection, and so his ignorance is his weakness, and his lack of insight the spring of his impatience. O! friends, did we only daily behold God in the beauty of His character, and live in the sweet and inspiring recognition of His matchless worth, we should never descend from those serene heights of heroism, where the souls of the strong sing, "Though He slay me, yet will I wait for Him."

VIII. Add, then, I beseech you this precious truth to the

manifold sources of your inward strength; that patience and fortitude in affliction and temptation bring glory to God, reveal our pure love of Him for what He is, and so repel the slanders of men and devils on His character as our Father and Redeemer! Who of us shall shrink from glorifying Him in the fires! Assured that the flames will not only refine character, and burn away the stains of inward sin, but also reveal His loveliness and glorify His grace, we will hold fast our integrity, die rather than do wrong, fight against Satan with our last fibre of power, and adore the Infinite Holiness and Love with our last breath. Cleansed of the traditional error that suffering is the sign of sin, misfortune the proof of wickedness, and the hardness of life an index to the heart of the Father, we will bear up right onward in our devotion to God and truth, "that the works of God may be made manifest thereby."

For He will not fail us. He is sufficient for us even when we are in the hands of Satan, and can uphold us, and deliver us as seems best to His wisdom and love. We are not the helpless victims of evil. John Newton says, "Satan can only go the length of his chain." Even he cannot thwart God's will, and malignant as He is, *must* serve Him. This is God's world and He rules it, and the dark and terrible forces of evil will only make more brilliant His righteousness and more conquering His love.

"BECAUSE I live, ye shall live also."

"It is to a thinking being quite impossible to think himself non-existent."

GOETHE.

"For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death, nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs', which endure
No light, being themselves obscure."

SHELLEY.

"My mind can take no hold of the present world, nor rest in it for a moment, but my whole nature moves on with irresistible force towards a future and better state of being."

FICHTE.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

"BUT I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH, AND THAT HE SHALL STAND UP AT THE LAST UPON THE EARTH."—*Job* xix. ~~23-27~~. 25

In our study of the peerless history of Job last Sunday morning, I attempted to set forth a fragment, and a fragment only, of the illustration which this magnificent drama supplies of that eternal law of our human life we are now investigating, viz., *that God gives to all who know and trust Him, and wait for Him, "strength according to their day."* "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."

I want now to go a step further.

Severer, sadder, more perilous days than those Job suffered when in the hands of Satan, few mortals, if any, ever had; and yet completer, sublimer victory never sat on any spiritual warrior's shield.

But I wish to ask *when* was Job's greatest conquest won? At what point in the malign struggle does he march forth in

the greatness of his strength subduing all his enemies and adding victory to victory in the most transcendant degree? Where is it that the sufferer, eaten through, and almost consumed, by his leprosy, attacked in mind and heart by the most plausible and destructive falsehoods, leaps up and strikes a death-blow at his foe? Where, in a word, is Job's Waterloo?

Is it when the old splendour comes back again to the family with more than twice its former brilliance, and the old wealth springs up on the farm with overflowing abundance, and troops of friends appear, each with his piece of money and ring of gold, and a fairer beauty and a deeper joy brightens and gladdens his home?

No; not there, and not then! *That* is the crowning of the conqueror; not the crisis of the combat. That is the day after the battle; not the hour of agony and struggle. That is the signing of the articles of peace; and not the outflashing of the victor's sword.

Then, is it at the moment when the long contest is over, and the warrior, prostrate and pleading, breathes forth the penitent's prayer—

"Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak,
I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me.
I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth Thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself and repent
In dust and ashes?"

Without question, that is a moment of crowded and glorious life in the typical sufferer's career, the wide-opening of the gate of heaven, the gleaming of the pinnacles and towers of the City of God, the vision of a divine ladder

set on the earth, and piercing far into the clouds and peopled by ascending and descending angels; but it is not the grand climax of his spiritual power, the boldest defiance of the poisoned dagger's point, the sudden crushing of the enemy in one whole-souled, impetuous, and dashing charge.

No! that crowning event comes earlier on the well-fought field! For though the contest does not end, the crown of the crisis is passed and the *real* victory won when there bursts forth, with all-enlightening ray from the dark-rolling clouds of Job's sorrows, the sublimely strong convictions, chronicled in the familiar, immortal, and exhaustless words,

"O that my words were now written!
O that they were inscribed in a book!
That with an iron pen and lead
They were graven in the rock for ever!
But I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth;
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God;
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.
My reins are consumed within me." *

* The rendering of this passage in Ewald gives a glimpse of the compression of thought—the thud of energetic feeling, and the massive strength of expression of the original. "But I know it my Redeemer liveth, a successor will arise upon the dust; after my skin, which they hack off—this (skin), and free from the body shall I behold—God; Him whom I shall behold for myself, shall have seen by mine own eyes, and no one else's! My reins are consumed in my bosom."—*Job*, xix. c. 25-27.

That is "the hour and power" of Job. That is the Mont Blanc of this poem of poems; the highest range tracked by this inspired and victorious hero. There in his Gethsemane he triumphs. From that moment "the prince of this world comes, and finds nothing in him" out of which he can extract a ray of hope for his attacks. When the cup, charged to the full with bitterness, is in the sufferer's hand, and he is ready to say, "If possible let it pass" on to another, an access of power arrives, enabling him to hold it with a firm grasp, and say, "Not my will, but Thine, O living Redeemer, shall be done. I am convinced of the blessedness of the final issue. I am content. I am victorious."

What, then, we ask, were—

I. JOB'S SUPPORTING CONVICTIONS?

II. AND TO WHAT USES WOULD HE HAVE THEM PUT?

I. But at the outset we must take care lest we misjudge our facts, and fail to get at the precise power of Job's convictions, through crediting him with more light than he beheld, and reading into his great sayings the ideas of a newer and largely different world.

It would be extremely difficult to find a breadth of Scripture, in the whole area of our two Testaments, into which more extraneous and alien matter has been pushed than this crowning passage in the Book of Job. Men, who have not striven to *expound* it, but to *use* it—a difference of immense significance—have attributed to Job a doctrinal system almost as elaborate as Paul's, and have scarcely found less teaching within the compass of these five verses than

exists in all the letters of the chief thinker of the Christian Church. First and foremost amongst the doctrines, unwarrantably thrust into this exclamation, is that of the *Eternal Redemption* effected for us men by Christ Jesus on the Cross, stated as fully and with the same luminous clearness as in the *Romans;* secondly, that of the thorough *humanity* of the Redeemer; thirdly, the *resurrection of the flesh;* and fourthly, the doctrine of the so-called *Second Advent* of Jesus to men. Indeed, if we did not know better, instead of thinking of Job as an Arab chief filled with the religious perplexities of his day, and living some centuries before the appearing of the Son of Man, we might imagine him one of those the Master called into His school off the shores of the lake of Galilee, or even a Professor of Theology in a nineteenth century College.

One of the most imperative and immediate necessities of our day is for us Christians to acquire a more reverent, faithful, and unselfishly *conscientious* treatment of the Old Testament, separating ourselves from every false, though pleasant, way of *using* the words of our holy books; and specially from such methods as treat the patriarch Job as though he were the apostle John, and the bungled, confused, and confuted sayings of Bildad and Zophar as if they were of the same value as the declarations of purest splendour and richest significance from the lips of the "man of sorrows" of the land of Uz. Of course, there is a true and real sense in which "Christ is in the Old Testament"—in it as the oak is in the acorn, and the closely-packed ear of wheat is in the solitary grain, and the Greater Britain of to-day is in the England of King Alfred; but it gravely imperils our reverence for these

writings to find sharply-cut statements of New Testament doctrines in the utterances of Aaron, the architecture of Bezaleel, the decorations and utensils of Solomon's temple, and the sacrificial details of the Book of Leviticus. Our *first* duty as students of the elder Revelation is to determine with invincible fidelity what each particular passage actually meant at the time of utterance, and to the person uttering it, and to resist with all our might every attempt to add to, and take away from, the simple, direct, and undeniable meaning of the word of God. One of the greatest obstacles to the "free course" and conquering march of the Word of the Eternal, is the portentous influences of those purely human bibles of tradition so abundantly in vogue. Only as we know the real ideas and convictions in the real men of the Scriptures, can we assess the power those ideas will secure for us in the actual working out of our own lives to-day.

(1) Still, perhaps, it is not surprising that a saying of such superlative wealth in itself, so impressive in its setting, stirring in its influence on the hearts of the sons and daughters of suffering, so ennobled in song and so perennial in its inspiring force, should have been enlarged by the gifts of loving hearts, and invested with the ideas of eager and admiring readers.* But all must admit that

* Ewald's interpretation of this transcendent passage is so rich and noble that I append it:—"Thus spring forth as from a purer, celestial air, borne by the Spirit, those few but infinitely weighty sublime words which constitute the crown of the whole contention—words of the purest splendour of Divine truth, without anything to dim them, which suddenly make the speaker an inspired prophet, so that he here at once begins quite unexpectedly with higher certainty. *But* (to what purpose further thoughts?) *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* Although I die unredeemed, misunderstood, persecuted, He

nothing could be more *decisive in tone* or *positive in assertion* than the words, "I know"—equivalent to, "I, for my part, am certain of this—whatever you may say about my insincerity and hypocrisy, and even though I am unable to refute your cruel allegations—yet I know what I am about to utter, beyond all question and misgiving, and in this absolute certitude am prepared to invoke the witness of

---

does not die, and will become my Reedeemer after my death; and *a successor* who lives and remains after me, a successor in my just cause and its advocacy *will arise upon the dust*, the grave, as in purely human relations the surviving *after man* and successor in all the rights and duties of the deceased, redeeming all his rights, and having particularly the duty of revenging the innocently murdered. . . . . But although this utterance is borrowed from the ancient sacred duty of avenging blood (the Goel), as this duty had at least originated in the thought of an unchanging righteousness and necessary retribution, everything appears here at the same time in quite new relations, because it is not a man, but God alone, who can be thought of as the revenger or restorer of the innocence of the man who dies from no sin of his own (*cf.* xvi. 19). But it would hardly be a partial restoration if merely men of a later generation, but not the spirit of the innocent victim himself, had knowledge of it, the spirit which is here the central interest. . . . The spirit of the deceased must behold its own justification even after the destruction of the body. . . . After I have lost skin and flesh *I shall*, nevertheless, *behold God*, shall then still feel the joy of the appearance and immediate presence of God also as the judge and defender of my innocence, which I cannot enjoy before the death of the body! and then, as follows of itself, with spiritual eyes, not with my present ones, and get as certainly and as clearly and sensibly as possible. Whoever beholds God becomes conscious of the pure light, the clear truth and the Eternal life, feeling no separation and no disagreement at all between God and himself; accordingly, no alarm, no fear, nor punishment. Of being able to do this in bodily life Job has long ago completely despaired, but he now knows that he can and certainly will do it spiritually after physical death. Full of joyful exultation, here at last his heart leaps at the surprisingly clear picture of this awful future moment, which is now so certain to him. . . . He feels his joy as already by anticipation his, as if wholly absorbed in himself, and, with the outward world forgotten, he could not sufficiently satiate himself with it, nor sufficiently convince himself that precisely he himself will enjoy it, so that at last, as if fainting in the highest rapture, he exclaims, *O I die!* almost from joyous agitation and highest longing."

eternity itself; for I wish I could have my saying cut deep into the hard rock, and melted lead poured into the incisions, so that my testimony might go down to all future times and receive the verification of posterity for evermore."

It is, in fact, a bold challenge made by a suffering man to the ages, an appeal from the accusations of clever but mistaken, acute but harsh and unsympathetic friends, to the tribunal of the God of Eternity; so thoroughly assured is he that he is announcing no ephemeral speculation, no imaginary guess, no selfish fancy, but fact, eternal fact, of which he has a present, full, and indefeasible conviction.

You cannot miss the ring of conviction in the man's speech. It resounds in every line, and fills the air with its thrilling music. He says what he knows. He believes, and therefore speaks. It is the grand outleap of his whole soul in emphatic declaration, defiant faith, and fearless appeal, "rising with the aspiration of a flame, the beneficence of a fountain," and the certainty of unclouded mid-day sunshine. "*I know.*" It is not desire or caprice, wish or will, faith or hope, but unwavering, absolute knowledge, whose voice arrests our listening ear, and directs our expectant thought.

(2) Three distinct assertions follow this quickening preface. First, he declares that *God is the Vindicator of right-seeking and right-doing men.* "I know that although I die misunderstood, unvindicated, and go down to the grave with all your falsehoods heaped upon my name, and your black calumnies hiding my real character from sight, yet God, my Redeemer, does not die; He lives on and after me; succeeds to my heritage, takes charge of it,

and of all that belongs to me, vindicates my integrity, and avenges all my hurt."

That language, you see at a glance, is indicative of a state of thought and of social life wholly alien from our own, and in which the administration of justice proceeds on lines with which we are no longer familiar. The sacred duty of kinsmen to avenge the damage done to their kin, is the one social form in which faith in the power that makes for righteousness finds expression, and kinship is the principal instrument for the execution of the decrees of justice, embracing and discharging the functions of police and witnesses, judge and jury, gaoler and executioner. God is Job's Goel. Now the Goel is the name of the kinsman, who, amongst Hebrews and Arabs, is obliged by the mere fact of blood-relationship to redeem the man who has fallen into debt by paying what is due to his creditor; to purchase the brother-slave from his captivity; to pursue, seize, and punish the murderer who has taken away the life of his kin. Some time since, Job, in his deep dejection, lamented the absence of a "daysman," an umpire, an arbiter, who should lay his hand upon both the contending parties, and mediate between them ;* now he soars far above that desire, and affirms that he is sure of *God* Himself as his Redeemer and Vindicator. He will act for him. Rescue is in Him! Redemption from loss, and pain, and wrong, and calumny is in Him! Of the *fact* he is sure; of the *how*, and *when*, and *where* he says nothing, but an invincible faith that, before "the *last*" moment in his history comes, God will be his Redeemer from all the ills of which he is then the

*Job ix. 34.

unfortunate victim, animates and sustains his suffering spirit.

Oh! the incomputable value of such a conviction! How often have I seen its energizing and sustaining energy? What strong and everlasting arms it has put under tired and overwhelmed men! A man is decoyed into the purchase of a business by false representations, and enters into it fully trusting the honesty of the seller, only to find within a few days that he has been grossly and wickedly deceived; and though broken down at the sight of lost money, the earnings of a toil-filled manhood; and of lost comfort for loved wife and dear children; yet, between his half-stifled sobs, he says with a feeling of inexpressible relief, "Thank God! I have neither lost my integrity nor my faith. I am sure He will not fail me. I start afresh, and though penniless, yet sure of Him and of His unfailing love and support."

(3) Nor is that all; nay, indeed, it is not even the chief solace of the troubled Job, for he is sure that he himself, in his own conscious person, will be the rejoicing witness of that Divine vindication. He sees beforehand the glorious re-assertion of his integrity. "I shall," says he, "I shall, after I have lost flesh and skin, and am withered to a skeleton, I shall behold God as the Judge and Defender of my injured innocence, and follow through the ages with spiritual eye and a glad heart the writing out of the Divine verdict as clearly and as certainly as I see myself wronged now."

He does not expect that clearing *here*. He is beyond that hope. Death is coming so swiftly; he already hears its foot-fall, and cannot look for his reward on this side of

the grave; but so fully is he satisfied that he will be able himself to share the exhilarations of a Divine "Well done" after death has done its worst and last, that he already exults in leaping gladness at the joy that is set before him. *He himself* will be there to enjoy that fruition. It is not that in some form or other his philanthropic work will survive him, and the lasting reproductiveness of his good deeds to the widow and the orphan, the poor and the desolate, cause a resurrection of his fame. *Positivist* though he be, and of a very high and spiritual type indeed, yet he is not anticipating joining the

> "Choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead, who live again
> In minds made better by their presence; live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end in self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge man's search
> To vaster issues."

No, it is *personal* and conscious witnessing of his vindicated character that neutralizes the poison of the bitter cup he is drinking, leaves him in full-toned spiritual health, and with tremendous strength of conviction to affirm, "*I* know that *my* Redeemer liveth, and from out of, or without *my* flesh, shall *I* see God, whom *I* shall see for MYSELF, and MINE EYES behold, and not another." Thus, if not in fulness of knowledge, yet in what is even more momentous and significant, in pure strength of faith and hope, Job rises to the serene summits of blessedness occupied by the apostolic prisoner at Rome when he says

to Timothy, "I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that I have committed unto Him against that day."

(4) But even that is not the most precious treasure in this chaplet of pearls, the most brilliant diamond in this cluster of precious stones. The chief, the conquering, and most meritorious quality in Job's mood of mind is his clear and steadfast recognition of the real but dimly revealed law that *the suspension of the accepted and outward manifestations of the Divine care and regard is not the suspension of the Divine sympathy, nor the withdrawal of the Divine love and help.*

The difficulty for Job, as for you and me, is not to believe in God, or even in His righteousness. We say with Cato—

"If there's a power above us—
And that there is all nature cries aloud
Through all her works—he must delight in virtue."

But our gigantic task is to believe in the *living* God, in His unbroken love, and His actual and available help of us right through all the painful minutes of "the hour and power of darkness," and even when we have attained to our midnight gloom. We do not see Him. We cannot trace His goings on our path. We go forward and try to descry His advent, but He is not there. We go backward, and lo! He is not there. We call aloud for His infallible verdict, and no voice breaks the unbearable silence. Alas! for us, flesh and heart fail, our feet well-nigh slip, and we feel as if we are cast off for ever. But Job, at such a moment, with shadows, clouds, and darkness resting upon him, a secret dread and inward horror of more startling

pains stirring within him, says, "Here I will hold, I know my Redeemer lives, *lives now*, and uses His life for me, watches over my lot, sees my bane and antidote, and is only waiting for the right moment to vindicate my character and restore my joy." The suspension of the ordinary signs of the Divine favour is no proof whatever of changed purpose, or exhausted love in God!

Isn't that the trial of our faith, brothers? Do we not, ay! even some of the strongest of us, break down at this point? Say we not with Cato in his soliloquy—

"That which He delights in *must* be happy?"

and because happiness is not our portion, and power not to our hand, do we not conclude that God does not "delight" in us? We've no misgiving as to His existence, but if He is, why does He hide Himself? Wherefore does He not, as Carlyle said in his blind agony, "Why does He not *do* more?" why does He not turn back the rolling seas of wickedness, construct a world without earthquakes, states without injustice and oppression, cities without knavery, villages without poverty and disease, homes without envy and disorder, and churches without selfishness and impurity—that is to say, why does not God make a world of puppets, and arrange everything on the principles of *mechanics*, making men perforce good and pure and true, as a well-made and properly-regulated watch is constructed to keep time with the sun; instead of creating man on the basis of a sovereignly free and dignifying choice, the necessity of personal virtue, the supremacy of law, the discipline of experience, and the evolution of the riches of character by trial? "Take, brothers, for an example of suffering and patience, the

prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed which endured ; ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity and merciful." Resist the diabolical sophistry which identifies a cloudless sky with an existing sun, affirms the unseen to be the non-existent, and the unhappy to be the unholy. *God is love.* That is His nature, the essence of His being ; not an accident, an occasional emotion, or a passing mood ; and, therefore, He is, as Job saw and felt, (1) the Redeemer and Vindicator of all souls that sincerely seek Him and diligently serve Him ; (2) the guarantee that defeated and humiliated and oppressed man will be set free, and exalted to behold the triumph of eternal righteousness ; (3) and the witness that man is at present, and here in this world, scarred and defaced with evil though it be, the object of God's pitiful sympathy, redeeming care, and constant protection.

II. Now let us notice the *fruitful origin* of these strength-giving convictions in the mind of Job ; for it is often more important to know *why* a man says what he has to say, than it is to know *what* it is that he does say. He may give voice to the merest platitude, and yet his inmost and insistent reason for speech may exalt the veriest commonplace into an oracle, and make the smallest and most familiar segment of the great circle of truth more quickening and brilliant than the whole effulgent orb. It goes without saying that Job's most far-reaching and comprehensive declaration falls unspeakably short of that abolition of death, and bringing of life and immortality to light, accomplished by the gospel of Christ ; but what it

lacks in fulness and breadth, it gains in the burning intensity and glow out of which it springs, and the sublime motives which urge and impel him, not only to speak, but also to covet a monumental and immortal pulpit for his words. His sayings form a window through which we look into his soul; a lit lamp by whose clear ray we see the workings of his mind, and enter into partnership, not only with his ideas, but with himself, as those ideas are born in his soul, and take their place in his life.

See them! They break out as suddenly and startlingly as a whirlwind after a prolonged calm, and astonish us by their majesty and grandeur. In the previous part of the colloquy Job has sunk to the lowest depths of despair. He seems to writhe and toss like a maddened, infuriated, and fettered beast in his den. He is broken in pieces with the grinding, crushing, and ever-revolving wheels of calumny and misrepresentation. Friends and familiars are against him; he is an alien amongst his associates, and worst of all, God has fenced up his way that he cannot pass, stripped him of his glory, taken the crown from his head, destroyed him on every side; out of the depths of his grief, he pleads with plaintive yearning, enough to move the hardest heart; "Have pity upon me! have pity upon me, O! ye my friends! For the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God; and are not satisfied with my flesh?" And then, summoning his whole being to the gigantic effort, he calls out in the consciousness of the deep and sure solace of his convictions, "O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a book!" They are not the fleeting breath of a moment, the

evanescent fluttering of an empty and trivial mood, but the expression of his fullest and inmost life; and he would that they could get a place in the golden book of state, or be cut with the iron stylus into the face of the prominent rock, and the letters filled in with lead, remain a witness for God and His ways, as long as perplexed pilgrims should walk the hard ways of human life.

There is no break in his sufferings; no rainbow arches the sky of his life; no cup of nectar invites his lip; no promise of returning prosperity sounds in his ear! The full weight of affliction presses with unrelieved severity upon his weakened and distressed spirit. The "outward man" is decaying with such rapidity, that as he looks at his shrunken and shrivelled skin, he already beholds himself the prey of the devourer, and yet he rises from his grave and soars like an eagle to the sun of the Divine Presence! What is the force that upbears him to these calm and victorious heights! Whence this strength of wing at such a crisis?

As a bird startled by the report of a gun instantly flies away, so the *impulse*, the goad, to Job's heavenward ascent is suffering itself; the very sharpness of his tribulation causes the rebound, pushes his thought far afield to the things unseen and eternal, carries him over the dark river, and supplies the back-ground for his vision of final triumph. "Tribulation *works* patience," heroic endurance; and "patience" works "experience," knowledge, enlargement of soul, wider and purer vision; and "experience" works "*hope*," and hope makes him the unashamed preacher of convictions that are dearer to him than life.

The door of hope is opened in the valley of Achor refreshing pools spring up in Baca's vale; Gethsemane and Calvary lead to the sweetest satisfactions and the highest thrones.

But though the impulse to speak comes from the very sufferings which his friends cite as witnesses to his hypocrisy and insincerity, the power of wing, the motive-force is obviously inward, and of the mind and spirit.

(1) And first in the genealogy of Job's convictions comes his passion to set the great controlling and cleansed faith of his life in the spotless excellence and living sympathy of God with men, directly over against all the seeming contradictions, chaotic perplexities, and bewildering entanglements of his experience; and so to prove that, although the false reading of his history and condition given by his "three comforters" was sustained and enforced by all that could be seen of his lot, yet it would receive its doom as essentially a lie and a libel later, if not sooner; and that whether sooner or later, still he was assured that a higher law existed, in the clear light of which his history would vindicate the divine administration and himself at one and the same time.

(2) Nor can I think this was all. From the spirit Job displays in his intercession for his friends, we may fairly credit him with the desire to guide them to the perception of the one true principle in the criticism of life. They are the victims of sense. They judge by appearances. They infer character from condition, and trace all calamity to personal wrong-doing, and see in fortunate and sunny surroundings sufficient evidence of a holy life. It is a miserable, delusive, and diabolical "clothes' philosophy" of life, that

makes character a question of "boils" or no "boils" on the body, sheep or no sheep on the farm, money or no money in the purse. How could Job, with his truer knowledge and keener sight, suppress the wish, "O that my words were written in a book; that they might confront you at every corner of life, until they forced you to cast out your false and perilous rules of judgment, look at facts in their spring and origin, read character according to its spirit and aim, and cease from persecuting souls which have the root of the matter in them?"

Still that passionate cry is heard! Still the need for that saner criticism of life urges itself on our attention, even to the paining of our eyes. Still men fasten on the trivial and accidental, "the mint and the anise," and neglect the weightier matters of principle and aim and spirit! Still a man is "made an offender for a word," which being familiar and misleading, is therefore omitted, or unfamiliar and arresting, is therefore used! Even yet in social, political, and religious life, "the root of the matter" is ignored, and not even "*Sartor Resartus*" is able to deliver us from our false and hurtful idolatry of clothes! Job's inscription calls for reading, exposition, and enforcement, as much as ever.

(3) But the deepest reason and strongest motive of all with Job must have been an insatiable yearning that the truth he had lived and felt and suffered might secure an immortal career of enlightenment and benediction. When a man has endured a great fight of afflictions, and with strong and patient godliness has uncomplainingly fought to the end that he might purge away the fogs of earth-born passion from his mind, and dwell in the all-piercing light

of truth, he values his acquisitions so highly that he would have them spoken with everlasting energy, and graven on the rocks of time for ever. His experience of the truth he sees lends it a new glory, makes him its advocate and missionary, and he is ready to go to the ends of the earth to persuade men to accept it and live by it. Paul feels that necessity is laid upon him, and he must hazard his life in preaching everywhere a gospel which it has pleased God to reveal *in* him, and incorporate with his best and most progressive life ; and Job has a momentary thrill of those grand fervours when he wishes that his words concerning his living Redeemer may form an inerasable inscription on the forehead of all time.

Nor did he wish in vain ; for as John Chrysostom says, "Job's words have not been written down with an iron stylus, as he desired, *but far more durably*. Had they been written as he wished, time would have obliterated them, but they have been inscribed in the imperishable records of Holy Scripture ; they are graven on the rocks of God's word, and there they are still read, and minister comfort to all generations."

God is better to us than our *best* desires, and gives a larger blessing than our fullest prayers. The incised rock and molten lead are not to hand, but a place is given to the suffering preacher in that "finer world of books within the world" yea, in that *finest* book-world of all—the Bible, so that instead of speaking in one language he speaks in hundreds, and where he might only have reached the eyes of a few solitary pilgrims he now addresses the hearts of myriads, and shall have an increasing congregation for evermore. "God is not unrighteous to *forget* our work

of faith and labour of love," and fervency of missionary desire; but treats us with ineffable generosity, and rewards our poor and faltering work with unsearchable riches—

"No life is lost, no hope is vain,
No prayer without a sequent deed;
He turns all seeming loss to gain,
And finds a soil for every seed.
Some fleeting glance He doth endow,
He sanctifies some casual word,
Unconscious gifts His children show,
For all is potent with the Lord."

"LIE not; but let thy heart be true to God.
Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both;
Cowards tell lies and those that fear the rod;
The stormie working soul spits lies and froth.
Dare to be true. Nothing can need a ly:
A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby."

GEORGE HERBERT.

"Restoration to spiritual health, or conformity to the Divine character, is the *ultimate object* of God in His dealings with the children of men. . . . The sole object of Christian belief is to produce the Christian character, and unless this is done nothing is done." ERSKINE.

The Penitence of Perfect Job.

"Yet shall the righteous hold on his way,
And he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger
and stronger."

"I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth Thee,
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent
In dust and ashes."

Job xvii. 9; xlii. 5, 6.

I. It is not possible to set out the salient features of *Job's strength*, with even a slight approximation to completeness, without taking into account the immense energy he derived from his burning consciousness of unimpeachable integrity.

Like Paul, he always "exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and men;" and, therefore, like him, his "native resolution was never sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," but he carried

the enterprise of holy living through to its last stage with inflexible daring, and enduring thoroughness.

Like Sir Galahad, "his strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure," and often, if not in express terms, yet in effect, boldly challenged even the all-seeing inspection of God, saying, "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart." The flame of hatred to all wrong burnt with unquenchable intensity within him, and held him upright and steadfast as he stood in the midst of the scorching flames of persecution, tied and bound, like a martyr, to the stake.

Not that he made no mistakes! he made many. He misconceived God's methods, misjudged God's heart, flung censures to right of him and censures to left of him, spoke rashly and petulantly under his insupportable afflictions, denounced his visitors as "miserable comforters," and their speeches as "windy words," and even allowed himself to think for a brief moment that he was given over into the hands of the wicked; and yet all through this chaotic blundering he was never false to his convictions; not once did he belie his conscience; never did he sink into an insincerity, or clothe himself with a "sham;" but maintained an unbroken consciousness of integrity of spirit, and purity of heart. He is to the last, as surely an "Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile," as he is a man of the land of Uz.

That integrity was one of the perennia sources of his steadfast will and "courage never to submit or yield;" and he knew it, and declared it. His antagonists bade him be silent, and foredoomed him to a swift and remedi-

less destruction; and though he met their cool assumption of his hidden guilt with flat denial, sharp invective, and pungent rebuke, and felt that the grave was opening to receive him,* yet he was persuaded that he being righteous, would hold on his way, and because he had clean hands would become stronger and stronger. The viper that has leapt out of the fires kindled by his misguided advisers, and fastened on his hand, threatening his life, hangs there without puncturing his skin, a witness to the complete invulnerability of the man who loves the right and lives to do it.

It is fact! Integrity is power. Sincerity is a high form of human energy. Righteousness as a passion of the heart, and an element in character and life, is a manifest and undeniable source of imperial force. Wickedness is, in spite of seeming strength, actual imbecility. An immoral purpose disintegrates the man, corrupts and breaks to pieces the compacted powers of reason and fancy, faith and will. As tiny worms bite their way into the hardest oak of the sailing vessel, and finally wreck it, so the voracious insincerities, falsehoods, and hypocrisies of the heart, eat away the solid timbers of the barque of character, and the fair-looking ship sinks to the bottom, far away from the harbours of eternal safety. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" Who is he that gets nearest to God, and enjoys His favour? "Who shall stand in His holy place" as His accepted servant and commissioned champion? "He who hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, and hath not

* Job xvii. 1.

sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." The strongest of beings is the holiest, and we men reach the very spring-head of power as we become partakers of the Divine purity.

II. But strange to tell, though nothing is more arrestingly resplendant in the prologue of this drama, and throughout its successive scenes, than Job's perfect integrity and conspicuous rightness, the closing picture of the hero is not that of a conqueror, but a confessor; not of an enthroned prince, but a kneeling penitent; not of a man falsely attacked, exulting in his spotlessness, and looking his accusers in the face unashamed, but of one eagerly retracting his words with a feeling of horror that he ever uttered them, and exercising repentance towards God with as much wholeness and sincerity as before he had dared his friends to lay a finger upon a solitary fault. The curtain rises, and there appears—not a culprit, leaving the court in which he has been assailed with defiant eye and glad heart, amid the ringing cheers of friends delighted with the verdict of the judge that "there is not a stain upon his character;" no! it is rather the Old Testament anticipation of the publican in the Temple, striking his breast with his hand, not so much as lifting his eyes to Heaven for very shame and confusion, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

That is not what you expected, is it? I am sure it cannot have been what Job expected.

Here is not a word about the defeated, overthrown, and overwhelmed Accuser! Satan is ignored, as indeed he

always may be by the soul that has the vision of God, and is raked through and through with the purifying fires of penitence.

Here is no echo of the thunder peal! "I know that my God lives, and that He will appear," right my cause, vindicate my character, and fling the insults of my friends back upon them. Not a sound is heard of that passion for imperishable literary power by which the generations to come might know that he was a perfect man, and one that feared God and hated evil! What cares he for his poor fame now he kneels in the presence of the All-Holy, and beholds his little and fault-filled life in the fierce light of the all-discovering purity of Jehovah?

Here, again, is no solution of the problem of human suffering; no uplifting of the mist and cloud of affliction; no revelation of the mystery of the proud man's scorn and contumely of the good! Even the insupportable and weary weight of pain is light as a feather to a soul like Job's, amazed at its temerity in having challenged the power and righteousness of the Eternal, and crying, "O God, I take back every word, I loathe all my speech, forgive, oh! forgive!" The language of genuine sorrow and deep self-abasement loads his lips, and his far-shining integrity is not worth a moment's lip-defence by the side of his failure to keep the law of his God. As Isaiah, abashed and overwhelmed in the Temple by the vision of the Thrice-Holy God, falls prostrate and cries, "Woe is me, for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips;" as Simon Peter is awe-struck and appalled by the manifestation of the wonderful powers of the Lord Jesus at the lake of Tiberias, and cries, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful

man, O Lord;" as Saul, the fiery persecutor, is struck to the earth, bewildered and beaten down by the appearing of the exalted Nazarene; so Job, seeing God, falls on his knees, sobs out his penitence, and loathes every effort his righteous soul has made at self-vindication.

Sincerity is good, but it is not sinlessness. Right aim is an immense power, but it is not total deliverance from evil. Indisputable integrity of purpose, and inflexible honesty of heart, are jewels of unspeakable worth, but they will not atone for rash speech, misjudgment of God, and hatred of weak and faulty men. Far to be preferred is a frank sincerity to the hollow and hypocritical orthodoxy that goes to and fro in the earth seeking what honest souls it may devour because they speak out what is in them, not because of any outward call of vanity or interest, but simply from an overflowing heart; still they are no excuse for a harsh manner, an indiscriminate censure, and a supercilious conceit. Meet, therefore, with healthy scepticism, I beseech you, that decisive gospel of the day which makes sincerity all in all, and hides a multitude of sins. Beware of the doctrine that it does not matter what a man thinks, or says, or does, so long as he is true to the thought that is in him. Be true, by all means; but think of Job's penitence, and remember that the heroic virtue of integrity and wholeness, superlatively good as it is, is not enough.

III. For it is the special charm of Job's story that it exhibits this high-strung and strenuous integrity dwelling in the same spirit with the acutest penitence and throbbing self-loathing. We can recognize these qualities *apart*, and appreciate them in their singleness, but that they should

blend in the same life, tenant the same spirit, and be sources of power to the same character, conflicts with our habitual thought. We expect John Bunyan, after his flagrant vices, to pass through an agony of remorse. It is the working of a just law, the fitting harvest to follow such sowing. That David should be immersed in floods of repentance after his base and cruel transgression, is what we anticipate, and are unsatisfied until we see it. We listen for the cry "Father, I have sinned" of the prodigal son as soon as we see him in his father's embrace, receiving the fruits of his joy at his return. But when the one perfect servant of God, the exceptional man of all men, God's boasted choice, who has hated evil, striven to *be* true and *do* right, and suffered countless ills in order to succeed ; when he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes, as overcome with his grief, we are tempted to treat his language as affectation, his penitence as paralysis, and his self-loathing as disease.

And yet it it notorious that the minds of culminating power in the vast brotherhood of the world's workers and redeemers, the shepherds and kings sent of God to lead forth judgment unto victory, have not been more deeply marked by their persistent devotion to purity of thought, uncompromising fidelity to fact, and aspiration after perfection, than by their quivering sensitiveness to the smallness of their achievements, acute sense of personal fault, and prevailing consciousness, often attended by spasms of weakening pain, of absolute failure. It is Paul, the sovereign thinker of the Christian Church, the fearless antagonist of an unprogressive Judaism, potent beyond all men of his century as a man and as a missionary who is

in his own esteem "less than the least of all saints, not meet to be called an apostle, a persecutor, an injurer, a blasphemer, and the chief of sinners." It is Augustine, saint and bishop, cleansed and cleansing, cultured and strong, with a manhood behind him of helpful toil and large success, who, as he lies dying at Hippo, his spirit bathed with serenity, though the Vandals are besieging the city, has written on the walls opposite him, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"; and it is the sweet, seraphic, and holy Saint Bernard, who chants the same verse as his swan song as he passes on to the calm seas of God's eternal love. It is Lady Jane Grey who repeats the cry for mercy of the penitential Psalms, as she ascends the scaffold; and Sir Thomas More solaces his spirit with the same strains as he lays his head upon the block to receive the fatal blow of the headsman's axe. It is William Carey breathing out his life in one steadfast flame of missionary enthusiasm, who sings at life's close the self-depreciatory and Christ-trusting words—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my Strength and Righteousness,
My Saviour, and my all."

It is the broad-minded Christian scholar and teacher, the creator of the "Broad Church" of our country, and the "Master" to a large and increasing host of disciples, who asks that the fifty-first psalm may be read to him as he enters upon the fuller life beyond;—that same song which John Rogers recited as he went to the stake, and Jeremy Taylor fashioned into a prayer. It is clear

thinking and pure-minded Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, said by his friends, and those most competent to judge, to be one of "the best and holiest" of men, "with least of the stains of earth, and most of the spirit of Heaven," who repeats again and again at the close of his immensely fertile life, the words "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin; for He made Him sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So that the righteous Job in his penitence anticipates the Church of the first-born in Heaven, and ascends to the rank of pioneer of the spirits of the just made perfect, as he goes through the seven-times heated furnace of sorrow for sin to his larger wisdom and sunnier prosperity. Even Don Silva feels—

> "Men may well seek
> For purifying rites; even pious deeds
> Need washing."*

How much more should Job incorporate penitence as a part of his immortal energy, and pass by its impulses to a fuller and serener life? For though he is more defiantly strong when he declares his immovable faith in the advent of his living Redeemer and Vindicator, yet he is really nearer the heart of truth and goodness when he wins the grace to retract his hot words, trample his self-defences under foot, and cast himself on the infinite love and mercy of God. It is fidelity to the clearest laws of advancing human life which marries in one and the same progressive spirit, inflexible consecration to reality and right, and deep and true penitence for failure and sin.

* *Spanish Gypsy*, by GeorgeEliot.

IV. Therefore, we do well to ask, whence came this penitential mood? What induced this change of feeling? Who is the Evangelist that leads Job to the Wicket-gate, and sends him on to the House Beautiful, and to the land of Beulah?

Is it Bildad, with his blustering invective? Not for a moment! Invective can be met by stronger invective, and the "scold" only makes a fiercer "scold."

Is it Zophar, with his "wise saws and modern instances?" By no means! Evangelical power is not abundant in proverbs, and it only requires a capacious memory and a quick wit to parry the blows struck with such weapons.

Then does Eliphaz subdue the fierce wrath of the afflicted man, and force him on to a minor key by his weird stories of visions in the night, and his touches of pathetic appeal? Even to this the sufferer has his ready response, and he remains undisturbed in his confidence in himself.

Surely, then, it is the logic of Elihu which over-matches him? Not even that! For though the fine speeches of the young man silence him, they do not change him. You cannot unlock a man's heart by locking his lips, nor bring him to trust and hope by convicting him of intellectual mistake. It is not by "*the hearing of the ear;*" by listening to the billowy flow of seas of talk; engaging in incessant debate, and eternal logic-chopping; mastering the "arguments *pro* and *con;*" digesting vast philosophies —not by any of these processes does the sufferer become the seer, and the seer the penitent; but in his own language it is because "*now mine eye seeth Thee,* THEREFORE *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

The unexpected revolution is effected by the revelation

of God to the eye of the soul. He passes out of the realm of mere "hearsays" about God to that of inward experience and actual communion; from the half-knowledge of the ear and head to the fuller and truer knowledge of the heart; from the fierce fight for ideas and abstractions to the sweet and serene emotions of child-like trust and cleansing sorrow. "Mine eye *seeth* Thee now; I only *heard* about Thee before." The distinction is real, deep, revealing. By the ear we gain information of sounds, their quality and quantity, loudness and pitch, intensity and harmony, and in these respects the information is trustworthy, but when we compare and contrast and weigh the results of hearing and seeing we uniformly prefer the knowledge gained by the eye to that we have through the ear. We may be mistaken as to the *voice* of a friend heard in the darkness of the night, but if the speaker comes into the light, the difficulty disappears at once. The eyes give fuller and clearer knowledge than the ear. Job knows God as he did not know Him before. The *character* of his knowledge is changed, heightened, vitalized, intensified, personalized. He knows with the vividity and power of inward experience. God is no longer a *Voice* crying in the wilderness, but a Presence in his heart and before his spiritual eye; not a mere message from the Unseen, but a Companion; not a distant Deity, speaking to him from the exalted and cloud-capped heights of Eternity, but manifest in his heart and felt all through his being; spirit communing with the Spirit; soul in converse with the Soul of all souls; the highest in man in fellowship with the highest and holiest and helpfullest in the universe. At last, then, the man's prayer, "O that I knew where I

might find Him," is answered. The sharpest pain he had suffered was the thought that God had abandoned him, and he was forsaken of his Master. It was not that he had suffered the loss of all things; no! he could joyfully take the spoiling of his goods, and recognize that "evil" to his body came from God as well as good, but he could not endure the loss of God. This was agony indeed! But now his eye saw Him! His prayer was answered; his deepest wish was granted! But oh! how different the sight from all he had anticipated! Yesterday, he had his brief in his hand, his "case" fully prepared; every item of evidence disentangled, and arranged with faultless clearness and an assurance that he *could not* fail to win; now the sight of God fires his moral imagination, compels him to look under all the beautiful masks of self-deception, burns up the mists which hung over his spirit hiding the dark valleys of his soul from sight, renders him incapable of self-deception by specious fairness of form, subtle speech, majesty of angelic seeming; sends to the inmost soul of him such stabs of painful self-rebuke that he tears his "brief" to pieces, confesses his guilt, and appeals for mercy.

Brother man, son of the loving Father, believe me, you cannot know God, the real God, merely by listening to the talk of your fellows debating "Eternal Force," "The Personality of the Power that makes for Righteousness," and the certainty of an "Unseen Universe." God is not a proposition. You are not a few ounces of grey matter, conveniently labelled "brain," but a "living soul," an individual spirit, dowered with faculty for seeing God with the spiritual eye, and enjoying Him for ever as your Redeemer and Guide, "nearer to you than your breathing,

closer than hands and feet": a living, all-pervading, and all-renewing Father. Even Paul, who may "have known Christ after the flesh," seen His form, heard His words, and felt His touch, rejoices with joy unspeakable in the vision of the Spiritual Christ Who fills and fires his heart and is the life of his life. So John, who leant on the Master's bosom, delighted to tell how He comes to the heart that keeps His word, and dwells there as in a home.* Expect that indwelling. Look for that sight! Do not wait to be argued into the knowledge and love of God. Hear all you may, and understand, but open the spiritual eye on God's revelations and you will find truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part He will make you to know His wisdom.

V. But you ask, was not Job led to this renewing *sight* of God by the *voice* that addressed, startled, and overawed him out of the whirlwind, following remonstrance by remonstrance, adding appeal to appeal, and forcing in upon his mind an oppressive and overwhelming conception of the creative and administrative power of the Almighty? Is not the *ear* the way to the spiritual eye, as surely as the sight of God is the way to repentance, and repentance the way to life?

Strangest fact of all in this drama! Yet it is even so. Job is not quickened from the death of conscious trespass by the piercing rays of the Divine holiness, as was Isaiah; nor is he raised out of his self-defending fervours by a

* *Cf.* 1 Tim. vi. 15; 2 Cor. iii. 18, iv. 18; Heb. xi. 27; John xiv. 2, 3, 4. See also in W. Nicholson, *Disruption and other Studies*, an essay on the Theology of Experience, by Dr. Franz Theremin.

revelation of the wonder-working providence of God, like that given to Ezekiel ; but his soul is suffused with awe as sentence follows sentence, each one like a lightning flash, laying bare the infinite, unopposable, and unequalled greatness and strength of the Maker of the Heavens and the earth, and all that therein is. It is as though the learner were taken to a museum, or lifted on to a pinnacle and shown all the glory of all worlds. The pages of the great book of nature are turned over before his eyes, and God Himself reads, in language of richest beauty and utmost pungency of appeal, concerning his doings from the beginning, when He laid the corner-stone of the great edifice of Nature, and the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. The argument, it has been well said, is that of "*Butler's Analogy" of Religion*,* "Come near, gird up thy loins like a man ; for I will demand of thee, thou that sittest in judgment on Me, dost thou understand which way the light comes? Hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death? Couldst thou take My place and administer the affairs of this wide earth, and all that dwells on it? Hast thou an arm like God? Look at the hippopotamus as he lies under the lotus trees, and in the covert of the reed and fen ; behold ! if a river overflow he trembleth not, he is confident though Jordan swell, even to his mouth. If thou canst not make and master such creatures as these, wherefore shouldst thou contend against their Maker?" And Job answered the Lord and said, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no

* Dr. Samuel Cox, *Expositor. First Series.* Vol. xii. p. 14.

purpose of Thine can be restrained. I have uttered that which I understood not. I did not know what I was doing. I had heard of Thee, and thought I had heard all, and gave speech to my folly. Alas! for me! I am nothing before Thee, and yet I have dared to question Thy goings! I have sinned! Forgive, O Lord, forgive!"

So this mingled description, remonstrance, and appeal delivers Job from the fallacies of his ignorance. Every tempting falsehood is disenchanted by his fuller and clearer knowledge of the limitless power, ceaseless rule, and inexpressible majesty and greatness of God; and then he passes —and this is the spring of the new and renewing emotion— he passes at once from the idea of *Natural* to that of *Moral* and *Spiritual Power;* from a merely curious wonder at creative, world-making and world-compelling force, to soul-humility, self-abasement, high reverence, and penitence, due to the recognition of the moral and spiritual character of the Maker of all things, and the Ruler of all lives. He does not rest in awe before the irresistible energies which invest and pervade him, besetting him behind and before, and laying their hand upon him; nor is he overwhelmed and speechless, but is filled with humility and hope, penitence and love, for he discerns that a

> "Greatness which is infinite makes room
> For all things in its lap to lie,
> We should be crushed by a magnificence
> Short of infinity."

Never was that gospel of the "Almighty power that bade the mountains rise" preached with more urgency and emphasis than in our own day. With the arresting energy of a whirlwind we are summoned to listen to the revela

tions of the ineffable greatness of nature and the essential insignificance of man; the resistless might of the cosmical forces which ceaselessly play upon and mould us, and the littleness and brevity of our human life; to the splendour and magnificence of the all-investing universe, and the ghastly and irritating weakness and suffering of ephemeral man. Students of suns and soils, stars and stones, bid us take off our shoes and stand in awe in the presence of the wonderful works of nature; and almost take our breath away by the disclosures they make of the tremendous potencies stored in our world. Nor is that all; the "glorious company" of the poets, led by their illustrious and matchless chief, William Wordsworth, allure us to the "vernal woods," the wide forests, the far-resounding sea, and the star-sown sky, and help us to lose our weariness, and solace our hearts in communion with the Spirit of Nature, so that the oldest of God's Bibles, the richly-storied and ever-fresh Testament of Nature, was never read by more skilled eyes or enforced by more eloquent lips than now. If the gospel of the power of God ever produced humility, reverence, and penitence, then verily these qualities, which lie at the root of all religion, ought to grow and flourish amongst us with tropical luxuriance.

But do they? Can they? Is there any connection between the communications of science and the existence of self-knowledge and the growth of repentance towards God? Has the scientific seer an ethical and prophetic function? Assuredly, and chiefly in obedience to the luminous Emersonian maxim that "all things are moral," so that the truth which flashes forth in the laboratory of the chemist will guide the worshipper in his devotions, the

revelation of the immense forces of the world inspire trust and hope, and the subtle and recondite operations of Nature will awaken self-distrust, caution, and awe. For we are pushed by the spiritual within us from *it* to *Him.* We must go behind the wall of "matter" to the "mind" that builds it. We are compelled to clothe the "Eternal Force" with personality, will, intelligence, justice, and character. *It cannot be less than we.* It must be as personal as ourselves; and being so strong and resistless, making all and directing all, is the Perfect, Supreme, and Righteous Good or—God. The voice out of the whirlwind of science thus helps us, till we say with Faber—

"All things that have been, all that are,
All things that can be dreamed,
All possible creations, made,
Kept faithful, or redeemed,
All these may draw upon Thy power,
Thy mercy may command;
And still outflows Thy silent sea,
Immutable and grand."

VI. Here, then, is one signal value of the knowledge of God, even of His immense power and greatness. It is the ground and spring of a true conception of ourselves, of our limitations and possibilities, our actual condition and ethical ideal. By the knowledge of God is the knowledge of self; in the knowledge of self is the knowledge of sin; through the knowledge of personal sin we come to penitence; and by a baptism in the fiery waters of repentance we pass to the reality and strength of life.

Dr. Moffat represents the Bechuanas as sinking lower

and lower in degrading and bestial vice as the knowledge of God becomes dimmer and fainter amongst them; and when their ignorance has so deepened and thickened as to be no more than a shadowy tradition in the memory of "the oldest inhabitant," their vice reaches its maximum of enormity and baseness. Archbishop Trench tells of a tribe in New Holland that had no word signifying the Supreme and Perfect Good; but so terrible was its lust of wrong, and so dull its sense of right, that it was prolific in terms for the most hideous violations of the command against murder. Our ideas of God are the measure of our morality. The highest ethic is of Divine birth. Noble ideals are God's offspring. No Godhood, no manhood. A bad God makes a bad man. The perfectest conception of Divine Power and Pity, Purity, Generosity, and Goodness, makes the perfectest human life. The true welfare of men is not built on the basis of a bare expediency, or of hard and competitive self-interest; but on the Living and Eternal God. "Now mine eye seeth Thee, I see myself, understand my acts, take a new measure of my behaviour, feel the inadequacy of my long-accepted standard, retract my censures, and repent of my freshly-discovered misdeeds." Every reflective and earnest soul obtains its strength for progress and service, and its impulses to the widest and highest culture, by going through Carlyle's "baphometic Fire Baptism" of suffering and agony over individual wrong, finding out that sin is a reality, a terrible reality, marring our beauty, poisoning our happiness, abbreviating our existence, contracting our power, and spoiling our life; but the surest road to that Baptism is by way of the Cross of the Lamb of God—

where is revealed the infinite power of the Father as *holy love* redeeming and saving lost man, and raising him out of the grave of sin into the new life of holy helpfulness and beautiful devotion. Men are eagerly docile, penitently reverent, and instantly and gratefully acceptant of the pardon of God in Christ when once they have discovered the poverty and misery of their living through dwelling in the light of the enriching and joy-giving God.

VII. Such God-inspired penitence swiftly vindicates itself in the pure sincerity and holy brotherliness it creates, and the reconciliations it effects between man and man, and man and his lot. Sin divides, repentance unites. Sin separates and alienates, repentance attracts, and heals, and saves; leads to prayer and intercession for those who have wronged us, and to loving effort for their welfare. Job not only ceases to challenge God, but he has not another word to say against Bildad. Humbled before the Lord, he becomes a priest offering sacrifice for Zophar, instead of a logician flinging his javelin at him. Repentant towards God, he is generous, affectionate, and noble towards Eliphaz and Elihu. The voice of prayer is exchanged for the clash of debate; the incense of reconciling sacrifice ascends in the place of the smoke of anger and scorn.

Set the tree of penitence in such a divine soil, and it must bear this kind of fruit. Once the spiritual eye sees the purity and love of God, the heart is prepared for "the enthusiasm of humanity," and the mission of salvation. "Fruits meet for repentance" grow apace. But if the sorrow start at the crack of the lash of the executioner, or

spring from the mere desire "to escape a deserved whipping," then it will be like the morning cloud and the early dew of the Eastern clime, which soon pass away. The king of Egypt says, "I have sinned," as he looks abroad upon the desolations made by the raging hailstorm; but it is the "storm" he sees, and not God, and so his heart is hardened, and amendment of life is postponed. The same confession is heard from Achan, but it is not till the "lot" has fallen upon him, the wedge of gold is unearthed, and the grip of the police is felt on his arm; hence his repentance is reluctant, and his grief forced, mechanical, and fruitless. Offending Saul appears amongst the penitents, as well as amongst the prophets, but his companions are not Paul the Apostle, the prodigal son of the pearl of parables, David in the fifty-first Psalm, or Job in this poem; but Judas, and Achan, and Pharaoh, and the multitude who, having no vision of God, have had no genuine hatred of wrong as wrong, and no flaming love of right as right, and therefore have failed to give those hostages to their fellows of forgiving, generous, and beneficent service which are the sure guarantees, at once of their own sincerity and the divine sources of their penitence. Begin with God, and you will not, and cannot, end with yourself. Even your bitterest antagonists will find a place in your prayers, because they have been made welcome into the home of your heart

VIII. And now let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. In the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength, and it is for us, all of it, and always; available in our direst necessity and on the safest terms. "Man in the hands of Satan" is not forgotten of his God! Forgotten! Never!

He is *still* God's servant, and empowered as God's champion, charged to witness for the Divine Name, and to glorify the Divine character. Satan is not lord of this earth, but God, and all beings serve Him.

"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" When He gives power who can withstand Him or His? We know that our Redeemer liveth. He has appeared to us and laid His right hand upon us, and said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold! I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and Hades." Therefore we will not fear; what can man, or Satan, or death do unto us!

But as our eyes see God in His Eternal Righteousness, and even though, yea, because our trust is perfect, our consecration entire, and service unflagging, and we walk in the light as He is in the light, we will blend therewith the cleansing and everlasting emotion of a sincere repentance, knowing that "If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" but if we say "we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

"REVOLUTION and Messianism destroyed the national existence of the Jewish people; but Revolution and Messianism were not the less that people's calling, the contribution which it made to the universal work of civilization."

RENAN.—*Rome and Christianity—Hibbert Lectures*, 113.

"We want progress, and shall not rest until we have divested Judaism of all its disfiguring rites and placed it upon that height on which we may hope we shall one day feel the brotherly grasp of all those who gladly inscribe their names unto the Only One of Israel, because they have felt and seen that God is with us." RABBI KOHLER.

"It is the most enduring people of the earth; it is, it was, it will be." GOETHE.

"Israel vanishes only to live on immortally in the better community, expanded into a Divine home for all humanity, and enriched by all the possessions that had ever been won."

EWALD.—*Revelation, its Nature and Record*, 256.

"The person of Jesus Christ is not the last shoot of the Israelitish nationality, but the completion of the Revelation of God which underlies its history." H. J. BESTMAN.

The Messiah-Idea: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I want you, my friends, to think with me for a little while this morning on CHRIST, not as He appears in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, the theme of prophet and evangelist alike; but mainly as He is to be traced in the actual every-day experience of the ancient Hebrews, forming the real heart of their conscious and unconscious yearnings, the vital centre of their imperishable ideas, the undying might of their hopes, and the staying-power of their unique and invincible patience.

I. You are all familiar with the curious and interesting processes by which we trace the MESSIAH-IDEA from page to page of the numerous and widely-separated books of the Bible, as we follow the devious windings of the golden thread of prophecy that runs through the brilliant and beautiful tapestry of Hebrew literature until we see the

Divine Figure clearly before us; or watch the star of Redemption, shining now dimly, and now with mid-day splendours, out of the obscurities and hopes, the faiths and labours of the institutions and events, oracles and poems, battles and marches, of forty centuries, until it appears as the Sun of Righteousness, ascending into the heavens of Hebrew life, and flooding the world with healing and salvation.

But all Inspiration and Revelation are in *men* before they find their way on to parchments; in souls stirred and quickened by the Great Soul of all, before they can be written in books, embodied in institutes, or graven in the rocks for ever. "*Abraham*," Christ Himself said, "saw My day, and was glad." His eye discerned the one, far-off, Divine event, towards which the whole creation moves, and he trod the lonely steeps of faith with firmer foot and serener spirit by reason of the sight. "*Moses* wrote of Me," says the same authority. He, massive as was his strength, and conquering his energy, rejoiced in the anticipated arrival of One, akin to himself in spirit and functions, Who should take up his unfinished task and advance it towards its predestined goal. The prophets themselves beheld the Star of God rise on the dark night of their troubled life, and felt all the exhilaration of the Revelation before they painted the thrilling panorama of the future for the solace and hope of their despondent compatriots. Therefore it is necessary to make a strenuous effort, *by means of the Biblical Books, to think ourselves out of the books into the real thought and heart of the ancient people of God, so that we may see the great Messiah-Idea as it is born and grows, enlarges and fructifies in their*

life, contributes essential elements to their character, fosters large conceptions of their mission, and nourishes faith and hope in the Living and Redeeming God.

II. But this Christ-Idea—which in its substance is that of Divine redemption for lost man, daily strength according to the fulness and variety of the daily need—is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and is pervasive not simply of the narrow and restricted race of Jews, but of the broad and wide-spreading life of humanity. It is in itself Eternal, though its manifestations exhibit every variety of obscurity and clearness, of severity and grace, of simplicity and complexity; and even when it has become the most convincing experience, it is still a hope; and notwithstanding it is the most solid and undeniable of facts, it is still the most inspiring of prophecies. Captive spirits in our own day find it their nourishing food not less than did the sons and daughters of the Exile, and aged saints lean on its strong support now exactly as they did nineteen centuries ago. For human life is essentially Messianic. What Edersheim says of the Jew is true of the entire race of man. "Their whole history," he writes, "is prophetic. It is not merely one or another special prediction that is Messianic; everything—every event and institution—is prophetic and Messianico-prophetic, and what we onesidedly call special predictions are only special points on which the golden light rests, and from which it is reflected. And it is in this sense that we understand and adopt the fundamental principle of the Synagogue, repeated in every variety of form, that every event in Israel's history, and every prophecy pointed

forward to the Messiah, and that every trait and fact of the past, whether of history or miracle, would be re-enacted more fully, nay, in complete fulness, in the time of the Messiah."* For the Messiah-Idea is not of Hebraic origin; it is from God, and of God. It underlies the very existence, progress, and victory of the human race. It is involved in the fact of a Divine Father in the heavens and a beloved child on the earth at war with the wild forces of evil, and exposed to fearful hurt and loss in the conflict; and, therefore, it appears *before* the Jew is born, and at the very birth of human history, in the promise made to Adam that the offspring of man shall be finally victorious in the combat waged with sin. The soft and cheering note of hope for man in God is struck from the harp in the hands of mortal man at the very beginning, and instead of bewailing the sinful past, the human singer is instructed, yea, I will say inspired, to anticipate a future of knowledge and victory, peace and blessing, through the foretold Representative and Leader of humanity. "Mercy thus rejoices against judgment" at the outset of human experience. Before men have felt the full bitterness of their wrong-doing, they are soothed and sustained by "the glorious Gospel of the happy God." Christ, as "the seed of the woman," appears as Conqueror of evil in and for *mankind* prior to his appearing as the seed of Abraham, and the source of blessing to the *nations;* or as the seed of David, and the glory and salvation of *Israel.* The idea is a fundamental fact lying

* *Prophecy and History in relation to the Messiah*, by A. Edersheim, M.A. Oxon., D.D., pp. 130-1.

at the root of human life, like the fact of the leaf at the root of all vegetable forms of life, or the idea of duty at the root of all our English life and literature.*

III. But still, it is amongst the Jews the Messiah-Idea finds the most congenial soil, grows with tropical luxuriance, brings forth the finest fruit, and so becomes prophetic, not only of what Christ Jesus Himself, the Unique Fact and Luminous Figure of all the ages will be and will achieve; but also of what all men may expect from Him, and His all-sufficing Revelation through all time.

(1) As a matter of fact it is notorious that this Messianic conception is coincident with the election of the Hebrews as a specific people to a specific work amongst the nations of the earth. It is the real ground of their national existence, and the true goal of their history. It forms the living core of their vocation to privilege and service, and is a veritable gospel for all men—as, indeed, all *Divine* elections are—a gathering up and concentration of force for its wider dispersion, a focussing of light so that its healing beams may spread over a wider area. God says to His friend Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country and

* For proof of the universal presence of the Messiah-Idea, see a book to which I was greatly indebted in the earlier years of my ministry, viz., *Christ, the Desire of all Nations; or the Unconscious Prophecies of Heathendom*—the Hulsean Lectures for 1846, by Dr. R. C. Trench, Archbishop of Dublin. He treats of the traces of anticipations, of the Vanquisher of Hades, the Son of God, the Perfect Sacrifice, the Restorer of Paradise, the Redeemer from Sin, and the Founder of a Kingdom; which are to be found in the annals of the different peoples placed, not outside the love of the universal Father, but outside the boundaries of Hebraism; for—

> "Every hope which rises and grows broad
> In the world's heart by ordered impulse, streams
> From the great heart of God."

from thy kindred," but it is that the wanderer may mediate in bringing all souls to their true Fatherland, and aid all hearts in the recognition of the privileges of their Divine kinship, for "in thee," says the Divine promise, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Hebrew life is missionary and evangelic at the start. The separation contemplates and prepares for a universal inclusion, a world-wide and everlasting fellowship. The promise is beautiful as a plentiful vine in autumn. The Abrahamic "fields are white already to harvest." *

* Genesis xii. 3. Delitzsch, Kuenen, Riehm, and others, translate "And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves in thee" ["in thy seed"] *i.e.*, shall wish for the special favours Abraham enjoyed. Dr. Stanley Leathes, Professor of Hebrew at King's College (*Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 34-5), maintains the grammatical accuracy of the English rendering (R.V.), and Dr. Edersheim agrees with him (*Prophecy and History in relation to the Messiah*, p. 55). But even Kuenen admits that "the *real* expectation regarding Israel's future glory lies before us in the Old Testament; no one, therefore, thinks of denying it; we are able to follow its origin and history in all its details; one prophecy supports and explains the other."—*The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, Kuenen, p. 496). Delitzsch says, "The promise means that all nations will wish themselves the blessings of which Abraham and his seed are the bearers, so that this desire for a blessing is a desire for salvation; Abraham and his seed becomes the means of blessing for the human race, first in the people of salvation (Isaiah xix. 24, *cf.* Acts iv. 25), but to the highest degree in the one Saviour, Who springs from Abraham." So this interpretation carries us to the same conclusion as that on the face of our accepted rendering. Riehm (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 56), expresses the same thought in a stronger form. *Cf.* also Gen. xviii. 19, R.V., "I have known him, to the end that he may command his children after him," *i.e.*, I have entered into personal relation with him so that he may communicate the religious ideas I have given to him to others, and so become the founder of a community enshrining and teaching those ideas. See also Genesis xxvi. 4; xxviii. 14. Another passage has given rise to much debate, viz., Gen. xlix. 10. On this Rev. T. K. Cheyne makes the suggestive remark—"There is reason to suspect that the instinct of simple Christian readers has led them nearer to the true meaning than the critical researches of 'liberal' divines," and sums up his Essay on the *Royal Messiah in Genesis* (Essay iv., *Isaiah* vol. ii.), in the words—"The dominion granted to Judah shall only give place to a far wider monarchy, viz., that of the Messiah." A more recent criticism on this passage is

(2) As the Hebrew people advance from institution to institution, and the religion of Israel becomes clearer and richer in facts and ideas, the Messianic conception develops and enlarges the place it has to fill, appropriating to itself the manifold vestures supplied by the varying experiences of the people of God.

Thus when *prophecy* ascends in Moses, and Samuel, and their successors, to the leading position amongst the formative forces of Hebrew life, and the witnesses and mediators of the spiritual order, the Christ-Idea appropriates it as its fitting garment, wears it for centuries, and becomes finally transfigured in the teaching, prophetic, and inspiring work of the Nazarene. "A prophet like unto Moses" appears on the horizon of Hebrew hope, and forecasts the completion of the edifice of Revelation, whose foundations had been laid so securely and solidly by the great legislator in the "Law." * The pale, curving rim of light which shone on the vision of the early pilgrims of the Hebrew faith waxes larger and larger, until it attains the full-orbed brilliance and glory of the gospel of the glory of the Eternal God.

(3) Again, when David carries Israel to its kingly dignity and power, and embodies in his gifted personality the matchless blessings of a peaceful and prosperous rule,

offered by Professor S. R. Driver, who adopts the reading of the LXX.—"*till that which* (or he that) *is his shall come*," and adds, "The clause may then be regarded as an indeterminate expression of the Messianic hope, which was afterwards defined more distinctly. Judah being designated as the royal tribe and the sceptre confirmed to it, *till that which is his shall come, and he have the obedience of the nations.* . . . In whatever way the difficult clause is interpreted, the verse, as a whole, is Messianic, in that it promises an ideal future to Judah."—*Expositor, Third Series*, Vol. ii., p. 14.

* Deuteronomy xviii 15-18.

and executes the mission of the sons of Abraham as a light to lighten the nations, kingship begins to enwrap the Messiah-Thought as a luminous robe, and the Christ that is to be is not only a second and greater Moses, but a second and greater David; a mighty hero, the founder of a perfected and conquering kingdom of God, victorious over every enemy, and filled with a joy that cries aloud and sings of the coming salvation of God.*

(4) But it is, as we all know, in suffering we get nearest the heart of eternal truth, behold the near approach of the delivering God, and receive the fullest revelation of the Christ. *The idea of the Messiah is made perfect by suffering.* The full and ultimate mediation is by a Cross. The most arresting figure in the Hebrew chamber of imagery is that of "the man of sorrows," with countenance marred more than any man's, the suffering "Servant of Jehovah;" but not suffering for His own sins, but for the sins of others, and *conquering* by suffering; by self-chosen, freely-elected, vicarious suffering.

The Divinity of that conception is so patent that it cannot be questioned. It goes so directly counter to all our human fancies and traditions, lies so athwart all we feel and think, and is so "hard a saying," that if it had not actually and undeniably triumphed, we should, like the Jews of old, passionately reject it. A conquering warrior, crushing his foes with resistless dash and relentless fury, we can understand and accept. A conquering Rabbi, winning a world of pupils by the magnetic quality of his genius and the elevation of his philosophy, accords

* 1 Samuel ii. 10.

with our expectations; but a conquering Sufferer, Himself God's elect, God's servant in whom He delights—this is absolutely and always beyond us and against us; and yet it is the clearest forecast of the Christ of Calvary, the one garb the Christ of the period of the Exile wears, and appears in the writings of Isaiah with a sublimity and wealth for ever unsurpassed.

So the Messianic-Idea appears in Hebrew history; in its *books*, making the Old Testament radiant with its presence alike in song and in story, in oracle and proverb; in its *men*, Job and Joseph, David and Moses; in its *events*, the Election, the Exodus, and the Exile; in its *institutions*, Sacrifice and Prophecy and Kingship; and in and through all, the innermost meaning of their history, the goal of their long march, the vitalizing element of their religion, and the most clear and vivid witness to the divine fact that everything in man's world is waiting for the coming of somebody or something to redeem, complete, and perfect it.

IV. *Now the Ideas of God are the food of men.* "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven and giveth life unto the world"; and if ever any Ideal descended out of heaven like a bride adorned for her waiting husband, it is the fair and beautiful thought of the advent of "the Anointed of the Lord," Himself the Son of the Father and Brother of all souls, linking all human souls to the Eternal Soul, cleansing them of all impurities, and inspiring them in the search for all that is good and beautiful and true; and if ever any ideal gave life, "eternal life," fuller, deeper, richer life, life so abundant

as to suppress all death and all that makes for death, it is this same Messiah-Idea.

Trace in a few particulars its workings in the souls of these sons of Abraham.

(1) Note how it feeds and nourishes their *faith* in the one, true, and *living God;* actual Ruler of their lives, accessible to their prayers, sympathetic with their lot, a Refuge in times of trouble, a Deliverer of the oppressed, a Protector of the helpless, a Healer of the diseased, and a Deliverer of the lost. It is only dimly and vaguely there, and yet it seems to *humanize the Divine*, without making them the victims of a weakening and disastrous image worship; and as it fills, enlarges, and clarifies in their experience, their monotheism becomes more and more vital and strong, attaining its maximum of saving intensity when the conception of the Suffering Servant of God is supreme over all.

To me it is unspeakably suggestive that, as the Christ is more and more distinctly outlined before the thought of the devout Hebrew, and increases in fulness of meaning, and quickness of human sympathy, so God becomes more and more spiritual, supreme, and universal, in their faith and love. He ceases to be a tribal, local, and national Deity, and appears as the Hearer of prayer before Whom *all* flesh shall come. It is in short, an experimental anticipation of the saying of the Master, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me"; for as they grew in their faith in and yearning for the Messiah, so their faith and hope were set more strongly in the living God.

(2) But it was chiefly as exhaustless fuel for the ever-burning fires of hope, that this Messianic conception wrought itself into the pith and substance of Hebrew life.

See that group of interested and interesting "quietists" at the dawning of the New Testament times, Zachariah and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, Anna, the aged prophetess, and Simeon, a just and devout spirit waiting in the temple, with serenest trust, but with suppressed intensity of desire for the consolation of Israel, looking into the eyes of the Divine Babe, and seeing there gleams of the glory coming to Israel, and of the salvation for all men!

See again, a little later, with what openness of mind and fulness of expectation the men of Cana and Bethsaida respond to the invitation to go and see the Messiah Who is called the Christ; and recognize the imperishable force of "the hope of Israel!"

Hear the woman of Samaria say, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" and weigh the significance of the scene. There stood before her the Figure bathed in the light of *present prophesy*, illuminating her mind by His mighty sayings, arousing her conscience by His searching tones; and at once her mind is thrown back on the prophecies that had passed from the Hebrew people and loaded the atmosphere at every point. She has no Bible in hand! She does not look for a *particular* text, as you would have done, and seek a special and word-by-word fulfilment. Indeed no text of the book had said that the Christ when He came would disclose the secrets of men's hearts and lives. No specific word fixed her eyes on Christ as the Revealer. It was not necessary that it should. The ideal, vague but strong,

indefinite but mighty, was in her mind, and at once she recognized in the Syrian Stranger the great Reality. It was not any particular chapter and verse, but the *grand hope* of the Old Testament, its sublime anticipations of deliverance and grace, that pervaded their minds and made them ready to rejoice in the first signs and proofs of the arrival of the Prophet and Saviour of the world.

It is in a crisis you test a leader, in a storm you find the strength of a ship, in a social disaster you discover the worth of a friend ; and so it is in the perils and persecutions of the Dispersion, the Jews learn the immense and unfathomable values of the great Messianic Hope. Sent into the severe but beneficent Babylonian and world-school, and drilled by such fierce masters as Antiochus and Nebuchadnezzar, they were sustained and cheered, made to feel their oneness as a people, and aided in discharging their function as religious missionaries, by the full assurance of faith and hope in the arrival of a day of deliverance and victory. The Messiah-Times burned brightly in the distance before every Jew. He was then, as Tholuck says he is now, "the man of the future," and always felt that Israel's enemies would be vanquished, their own vassalage terminated, and that they must win the day. National abasement urges them to lift higher and higher the flag of hope. The fires of suffering cleanse their faith. The worse their fortunes, the fiercer their courage and the stronger their expectation ; and so, in the language of Renan, hope had become, at the time of Christ's appearing, "the very soul of every Jew."*

* The writings produced between 170 and 90 B.C., show the undiminished energy of the great Messianic hope. *e.g.*, the Book of

And in inferior measure the same may be affirmed of the whole course of their pilgrimage from the time they started in Abraham to the present day. There have been variations in the glow and intensity of these burning fires of desire and expectation, but they have never been utterly extinguished. The forms of the flames, too, have changed at different intervals, the personal element occasionally filling the whole orb of outlook for a long period, and then giving place to the idea of a national restoration, or the resumption of governmental powers in a particular locality; but in some form or other the Messianic hope has wrought out what has been designated one of the chief evidences of Christianity, "the perpetuity of the Jews."

(3) Nor can it be questioned that from the first, this Idea enlarged the conception of the *range* of their life as a people; gave them that strong sense of a *mission*, which is so salutary and strengthening to man and woman, to child and to nation; kept alive their conviction of being the predestined builders of a world-kingdom, the creators and mediators of a universal brotherhood.

It lifted Abraham out of the narrow and restricted area of his own family, and set him forward as the Patriarch-apostle; it infused into the Law of Moses a considerateness for the "stranger" not common to other

Enoch (Jude 14, 15), the Sibylline Oracles, the Psalter of Solomon, "Little Genesis" or the Book of Jubilees, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Ascension and Vision of Isaiah, and the Assumption of Moses (Jude 9). The books of the Apocrypha, though failing in many respects, do not lack evidence of this underlying idea. Ecclesiasticus xxxvi. 1—10 and 11, 17. Baruch iv. 22. 37. Tobit xiii. xiv. See Prof. James Drummond on the *Jewish Messiah* and Dr. Edersheim's *Prophecy and History*, for evidence in detail.

codes of legislation; it opened a door for Ruth the Moabitess into the genealogy of Israel's kings; it gave wings to the genius of Israel's singers; and as it gained in strength and pathos, it voiced itself in the common prayer,

"Let the peoples praise Thee, O God,
Let all the peoples praise Thee.
The earth hath yielded her increase.
God, even our own God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us,
And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

In fact, this idea inspired and moulded their literature, and is instinct in it from beginning to end. They have an Old Testament because they have a Messianic idea to express and perpetuate. The books grow out of the life. Divine Redemption is the originating impulse, at once of their exceptional history and of their exceptional annals. They are kept steadfast, immovable, always abounding in work for the illumination and regeneration of the world, partly by the sense of the high vocation wherewith they are called, but mainly by the consciousness of being gifted with unsearchable riches of truth for all mankind.

Nor is this sense of an evangelic mission dead or dormant in the Jew of to-day. Still it throbs in his heart. Still it urges him out of the literalisms and ritualisms of the early stages of Hebrew history. Still it impels him to reforms that, in spite of himself, go far to make a Christian of him. "Work without hope," says the poet, "cannot live," and surely it is also true that hope without work soon withers and dies. Since, therefore, the light of the Hebrew hope still burns, the efforts of the Hebrew leaders

"to teach the nations how to live" are still maintained, and occasionally give signs of the slowly but surely-approaching emancipation of Judaism from all its tribal limitations, and its realization of the beneficent universality that occasionally shone forth with magnificent splendours in the visions of the Hebrew prophets.

One such sign of the existence and growth of a vigorous reformation amongst the Jews, is the publication of "the theses" of Mr. Claude Montefiore,* in which he maintains (1) That a re-settlement of the Jews in Palestine would be a retrogression, and not an advance; (2) That the expectation of a *personal* Messiah must be abandoned; (3) That the Mosaic law is incomplete; (4) and that their business is the proclamation of the Unity of God, His just judgment of the world, the free relation of every man to God, the continual progress of humanity, the immortality of the soul, and the Divine election of Israel "*to a religious mission not yet fulfilled.*"

And what is unspeakably more important, is that it is through such work and hope and faith that the Jew of to-day is discovering that Christ Jesus is assuredly the Saviour of the Gentiles. Dr. Schiller-Szinessy, of the University Library, Cambridge, expresses, a growing conviction amongst the intelligent Jews, when, in defence of the words "moral and glorious," as applied to Christianity, he explains in what sense he looks upon Jesus of Nazareth as a Saviour of the Gentiles. "For what," he says, "were the Gentiles before the light of Christianity rose upon them? Chaste lips cannot repeat what their own great authors write of

* *Contemporary Review*, September and November, 1882.

them and their immorality. No one can read without a burning cheek what Seneca says of their married women, what Juvenal says of their men, what Tacitus says of their emperors, and what our and your own Saint Paul, the Jew and the Christian, says of the moral degradation of the Roman converts previous to their conversion to moral and glorious Christianity. Of a truth ! Jesus is a Saviour of the Gentile world, seeing that ye, Gentile Christians, are the seal of His Saviourship in God !" To this he adds, "I am very naturally proud, as no doubt all Jews of a proper education are, of Judaism, a religion to which I belong by birth and conviction. But if it were possible to be still prouder of it, I should be so because it was the religion which gave birth to Christianity, a religion which has saved, *i.e.*, weaned away, countless Gentiles from the vices inherit in heathendom."*

But there are greater things than these. Men are beginning to see that the Christ of Palestine is the golden link between the past and the future, the Old World and the New, and the Old Revelation and the New Need of to-day. Know you not what has recently occurred in the South Russian province of Bessarabia ? Have you not read in the papers of the movement under M. Joseph Rabinowitz, a lawyer and man of influence in Kischeneff, and the leader of the Church of the "Israelites of the New Testament ?" Without doubt this is one of the most cheering and prophetic of recent facts, and one of the most convincing illustrations of the great principle that the Old Testament, fairly understood and fully followed, carries us into the

* *Jewish Chronicle*, July 17, 1885.

Christianity of Christ Jesus, according to the word of Christ, "Everyone that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to Me." "Repudiating the dogmatic forms of the Gentile Churches, and retaining so much of the Law and of the national customs as is not inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel," these Hebrew Christians cling to the idea of a personal Messiah; not merely on Biblical grounds, but because "the moral and spiritual wounds" of the Jews require a physician, and this physician, this national leader or Messiah, they declare, can historically be no other than Jesus of Nazareth. "Therefore," says the twelfth thesis of their programme, "our strong love to our Israelitish brethren obliges us to sanctify and reverence the name of Jesus our brother; devoutly learning His holy words, and taking the books of the New Testament into our houses for a blessing, and uniting them with all the sacred writings which our true wise men in all generations have left us for a blessing." Nor shall we be surprised that the movement is growing when we hear its leader say, "I first of all honour Jesus as the great man with a compassionate heart; afterwards as Him Who sought the good of my people; last of all, as Him Who has borne my sins." So by the door of Redemption he enters into the kingdom of peace and joy, allured to that door by the beautiful self-sacrifice and deep pity of the heart of Christ; but prepared to respond to the spell of the Saviour's character by his recognition of the Hebrew hope and the Hebrew vocation.*

* *Cf.* "The First Ripe Fig,' by Professor Delitzsch; "The Everlasting Nation," by Dr. Saphir; *Christian Leader*, June 11, 1885, p. 380; June 25, p. 408. *Expositor*, Third Series, Vol. i., pp. 411-12. In an article in the *General Baptist Magazine*, 1883, p. 165, on the Jewish Race, I wrote—"Will the Jew come to Christ? I dare not

Let us rejoice in these "signs of the times," and hail with heartiest welcome not only such definite approaches as these, first, to the recognition of the moral and spiritual values of Christianity to *men* as men, and next to the acceptance of the additional and complementary Revelation of God in Christ Jesus, but also those reform-movements here, in the United States, and elsewhere, which are now advancing with growing intensity amongst the Jews. Away with the notion that the Jews are under "a curse" for the rejection of the Messiah! It is part of the evil brood of the days of persecution, gone, thanks be to God, from amongst us, and never to return! Away for ever with disparaging judgments springing out of race prejudices that ought not so much as to be named amongst us! Away with the base and cowardly antagonism to their presence in our markets, our literature, our whole life? Does not our Master Himself teach us that in Him the distinctions of race disappear, and that Jew and English are one in the Divine brotherhood He reveals?

Moreover, what we call the "curse" of the Dispersion has been the signal accomplishment of their missionary vocation, and the answer to their prayer, "Let all the peoples praise Thee." "They have gone everywhere preaching the word" of the Divine Unity, witnessing for the reality of a Divine Law and the

doubt it. Christ is the ideal Jew, as He is the ideal man; and the Jew will yet gladly confess in Him the best, clearest, and fullest revelation of the God, Who spake by Moses and Elijah, and of Whom David and Asaph sang. Let Christianity be disencumbered of its superstitious dogmas, freed of its ecclesiastical and ritualistic follies, and set forth in its original simplicity and beauty, and it will shine out conspicuously as the fulfilment, *i.e.*, the filling out, of all the noble, plain, and gracious promise of Judaism in its grandest days."

certainty of a Divine care, showing in their own experience the method of that Divine Alchemy which makes the wrath of men to praise God, and converts the mistakes of a generation into the beacons and benedictions of ages! The world owes more to the Jewish race than to any other—than to all others put together. Let us pay our debt in love and sympathy, and brotherly co-operation in the welfare of the world. We worship *one God*, even the Father. Our hope and theirs roots itself in Him. We and they have no expectation of good but from His mercy which endureth for ever. We are travelling to *one Home*, expecting to dwell together in "The house of the Lord," and to find our satisfaction as we awake from the sleep of death into the likeness of the Eternal. Yea, we are one in the *substance* of our Messianic anticipations, for to us, and to them, surely the Messiah-Hope must mean more of God, a quicker sense of His presence in all things, a deeper delight in His favour which is life, and a bliss that is unbroken because it is Divine. And if we know, as indeed we do, that for us this hope has become an experience in large measures, and the expectations of ages are fulfilled in the great typical Jew of Bethlehem—what should this do for us but fill us with His Spirit, and aid us in proving that as we are *one* in the worship of *one* God, the possession of one *hope*, so are we *one* in a genuine brotherhood of fellowship, liberty, love, and service for all mankind!

V. How, then, for us Christians, stands that great Messianic Idea now?

First, it is no longer a fondly-cherished anticipation,

a vague and indefinite yearning, a deep and nature-filling enthusiasm !

It is more ; infinitely more ! The Messias has come ! Jesus of Nazareth, "our brother," He is the Christ ! As Rabinowitz said, as he sailed through the Suez Canal, He is "the Lesseps connecting the Old and New Testament together ;" yea, more, He, in His earth-life, is the practical, undeniable, and available exposition of the Idea of the Divine Father engaged in the Redemption of mankind. The Word is made flesh and dwells amongst us, and we behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

God is historic in the fullest sense in Christ Jesus. The Old Testament is a record of God's dealings with men—not simply of His sayings to them ; and this work of His reaches its historical personal climax in the Son of Man. The question is not one of particular texts ; of chapter and verse in Isaiah matching chapter and verse in Matthew ; it is one of the structure of the whole of Revelation. For as surely as Nature in the fulness of her riches and the marvels of her growth verifies the prophecy of "progress" contained in the earlier development of life on this planet ; as English political life fixes and embodies the Idea of Liberty underlying the *Magna Charta ;* so the history of the world for nineteen centuries demonstrates that the Messiah-Idea of the Hebrew prophets and poets is in all essential points made FACT in Christ Jesus.

Is it so ? Let us see.

First, then, what is the kernal of all expectation and prophecy ? Is it not the arrival and establishment of a KINGDOM OF GOD, a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and

joy on the earth? Is not this the leading idea of our Old Testament?

That cannot be questioned. It appears, not here and there, but all the way through, from Genesis to Malachi, in history and poetry, in institutions and in men. It is the one *mould* in which the whole Hebrew life is cast. Prophecy is not mere prediction; it is the chief agent of the God of Israel in announcing and securing the rule of God over men. Kingship is not a human artifice; it is the fitting mirror of the government and legislation of Jehovah. History is not a report of battles or a tale of loves; it is a revelation of the authority and administration of God. "The call of Jesus," says Keim, and with him all competent students will agree, "points back, first to John and then much further into the Old Testament. *The conception of the Kingdom of God*, which to our modern consciousness seems somewhat obscure.....is the one pervading and impelling idea of the Old Testament."

Does Christ fill in that outline wholly or in part; at all points or in some points; if only at some points, is it with the promise of a complete fulfilment by and by!

Assuredly! The kingdom of God has come. God's rule over men has been more real and aggressive since His day. In the words of Jean Paul Richter, "He being the Holiest amongst the mighty, and the Mightiest among the holy, has lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, has turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." All that is most progressive, morally and spiritually in the Hebrew life and in the Hebrew literature has been summed up, expanded, and advanced, by Christ Jesus to an extent that

is absolutely inexplicable save on the supposition that both type and antitype, promise and fulfilment, are the work of one and the same eternal Mind.

That being so with the capital idea of Hebrew life and history, what about the details?

It is admitted that the "Messiah" of the Old Testament is *the* Servant of the Lord; does His work and fulfils His will! Does that appear in Jesus of Nazareth?

Every fair and full consideration of facts compels the admission that He not only claims to fill that place, but as a matter of fact discharges that service to the spiritual administration of God, makes more luminous the idea of the Divine Fatherhood, the fact of redemption from sin and victory over evil, the blessedness of humility, and the joy of perfect obedience.

Do these Scriptures speak of an Ideal City, a new heaven and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell, a new Rome, cleansed of the vileness and vice, brutality and savagery of the City of the Cæsars, a new and holy Jerusalem whose gates are Salvation and whose walls are Praise? Naught within these eighteen centuries has done more, notwithstanding the defects and faults that cling to all that is human, to hasten the actualising of that ideal than Christ and His Gospel!

Are the narrow boundaries of Judah and Israel to be enlarged so as to embrace all men; and is the worship of God to become the bond of universal fellowship?

Then Christ Jesus, by His teaching concerning God as the Father and Saviour of all men, the absolute spirituality of all acceptable worship, the freeness of His pardoning mercy, the superiority of duty to dogma and mercy to

ritual, has given an impetus to the movement for an universal religion never before equalled and that never will be spent.

In short, accept the Messiahship of Jesus, and all that is mysterious in the Old Testament Hope is cleared up, what is vague is rendered definite, what is partial is made complete, what is in prophetic shadow shines in the clear day-light of fact. The Messias has come. Jesus is the Christ.

VI. But we must not forget that although the Messianic Idea is incarnate in Christ, its work as an Idea is not yet completed. It is the same in the for-ever of humanity as it was in the yesterday of Hebraism. It is not *of* the flesh, though it clothed itself in flesh, and fixed itself immovably and indestructibly in the growing life of the world. It is not of *time*, though it appeared in "the fulness of time," made of a woman, made under the law; it is of *Eternity*, and is the Bread of God giving life to the world for evermore, and giving it more abundantly and readier for perfect assimilation and use because of its incorporation with the last eighteen centuries of human story. Like Tennyson's "Virtue,"

"It is always going on, and ever to be."

So long as men hunger for the bread of truth, seek to nourish a large and growing hope, and feed strong and elevated spiritual aspirations, that Idea, charged now and for evermore with full and exhaustless energy, will continue to discharge its inspiring functions for men.

Therefore, Christ is still the HOPE of the world. He is not only the Fulfilment of prophecy, but also Himself a

Prophet, completing the old order, and bringing in the new, interpreting the past, and illuminating life and immortality; enlarging and cleansing and intensifying our spiritual conceptions, and feeding our hopes for ourselves and all our race. "We see not yet all things put under His feet"; and, therefore, He holds to us and our future the same relation that Messianic prophetism held to the Jews. We rejoice in His Redemption, but we need Him in all the power of His Spirit to nourish our *faith in the living God, our hope in the continuous progress of mankind, and our power of work for the salvation of the race.*

"Things learnt on earth we shall practise in heaven," says Robert Browning. It must be so. Our ideal itself enlarges and enlarges, and yet does not reach the magnitude and perfectness of the Christ. We feel we must have a "for-ever" in which to move forward towards the fuller realization of all the beauty and progress He has set before us. For He has added to the small island of our being, not a continent, but a universe; opened for us, not a century, but an eternity of ever-enriching spiritual advancement; and supplied us, not with the strength of angels, but with the plenitude of the power of God. Oh! brothers, if the expectation of the Christ of Bethlehem wrought so effectively for the purification and consolidation of Israel, fed and nourished their common life, inspired unselfish and exalted aims, what may we not expect from the hopes that centre in Christ, the ever-living Prophet, the Yea and Amen of all promise and aspiration, concerning the victory over all human wrong, the triumph of virtue, and the blessed progress of the human race!

"Beloved, now are *we* children of God, and it is not yet

made manifest what we shall be. We know we shall be like Him;" and so the Idea which the ancient seers saw in dim outline, and later prophets sketched in fuller form, and Jesus of Jerusalem embodied before men, shall find fresh realization in each of us; His grace and beauty shall clothe us, His joy gladden us, His purity adorn us, and His bliss fill us.

I have read of that versatile and masterly genius, Michael Angelo, that he once visited the study of the young Raphael. The junior artist was not in, and Angelo departed without leaving his name; but before he left, he took a piece of chalk and drew on the canvas underneath the poor and meagre design of Raphael, a bold, sweeping line, and added the word "Amplius." Raphael seeing this, knew, at once, who had been, and "forthwith changed his style, and became the painter the world calls divine." Brothers, Christ Jesus comes thus to us, and looking at our contracted aims and poor schemes and meagre work, He writes underneath, "*Amplius, Amplius.* WIDER AND FURTHER; MORE AND STILL MORE;" "Ask of me, and I will give the peoples of England and Italy, of India and of the world, for your inheritance."

We need to change our style. It is cramped and tattered. It wants the freedom of His unselfishness, the glow of His marvellous enthusiasm, the energy of His purity, the majesty of His repose, and the victory of His obedience. O, Divinest Artist, fire us with Thy genius, breathe into us Thy Spirit, fill us with Thy inspiration, for Thy Father's sake!

'IN the Bible there is more that *finds* me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit."

COLERIDGE.

"Books are precious heirlooms from one generation to another, training us, encouraging us, teaching us, by the words and thoughts of men, whose bodies are crumbled into dust long ago, but whose words—the power of uttering themselves, which they got from Christ, the Word of God—still live and bear fruit in our hearts, and in the hearts of our children after us, till the last day."

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

"He charged us before God and His blessed angels to follow him no farther than he had followed Christ, and if God should REVEAL anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his own ministry. For he was very confident the Lord had yet more light and truth to break out of His Holy Word."

ROBINSON, *when he bade farewell to his persecuted and harrassed followers on the shores of Holland.*

The Service of the Old Testament in the Making of Men.

"EVERY SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD IS ALSO PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION WHICH IS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETF FURNISHED COMPLETELY UNTO EVERY GOOD WORK."—2 *Timothy* iii. 16.

I purpose showing in what ways the Old Testament, of which Paul is exclusively speaking in these words to and about Timothy, was as a *book*, or *collection of books*,* a channel or vehicle of Divine life and power to the Hebrew people; teaching them in their successive generations eternal religious truth; generating invincible convictions of duty towards God and men, women and children, aliens from, and members of the commonwealth of Israel; exhibiting and correcting defects of character; and inspiring ceaseless and patient drill in the practice of righteousness as it is in God, and may, by His all-sufficing grace, be in man, His child.

Regarded simply as a growing body of literature, which

*The first title given to the Bible in the West was *Bibliotheca Divina*, or Divine Library.

appears at first in imperishable fragments of exceptional merit, is then circulated as brief tracts, graphic histories, lyrical hymn books, devout prayer books, and inspiring oracles; and finally becomes compacted into one unique and unrivalled volume; these Scriptures, full of the quickening breath of God, formed one of the most effective and distinguished instruments for directing the spiritual life and fashioning the national and social order of the Children of Abraham; a chief "means" of securing "*strength according to their day;*" and advancing through a pure, joyous, and strong religion, the redemption and regeneration of humanity.

"Salvation is of the Jews;" first and foremost through the Jewish Christ; and next, and with only inferior efficacy, through the Jews' Bible.

(1) In the grey dawn of the world God SPAKE to our fathers by the prophets: and His voice was a Revelation. "God spake these words and said"; not only what He wanted men to be and do, but also and chiefly what *He* was, and is, and will be. The word disclosed the Being, made manifest the spirit and purpose, the ideas and character of the Eternal, and so furnished self-evidencing religious truth, searching men's souls as a divine flame; gave a nourishing and inspiring religious ideal, at once satisfying the heart and impelling the will; and guaranteed grace available and sufficient for pardon and peace and purity.*

* "It is not the Bible only and the true religion taught by it that knows something of a Revelation of divine words for men; all historical religions, without exception, proceed from such a basis." EWALD, *Revelation; its Nature and Record*, p. 1

(2) But the mediation of human language is not enough to satisfy the yearning of God for fellowship with His creature, man. The living God "did," as well as "said"; and His "words" were only a part of, and accessory to, His redeeming action. His dealings with men are *personal*, soul with soul, and His deeds became incorporate with the lives of men, part of their actual experience, woven into their individual and national histories; thereby adding ineffable wealth to the mysterious heritage to which every man is born, and enlarging the vast stores of spiritual influence which greet every son of God at his advent to this troubled sphere.

(3) Nor was this all. "Kind words," pure, true words, we say with the authority of fact as well as of poetic license, "can never die." They abide in the beauty of the lives they enrich, the sweetness of the emotions they create, the strength of will they influence, and "the loveliness of perfect deeds, more strong than all poetic thought," they inspire. But words, as *words*, must be caught by the attentive ear, and fixed in the retentive memory, and repeated from lip to ear, through the circling ages; or seized and held by the swift pen of the ready writer, or handed over to the securer custody of printer's type, in order that they may continue their mission of enlightening and gladdening the lives of men. Books perpetuate speech; give an abiding presence to the fleeting message, and form a magic wand by which the "dead but sceptred spirits still rule us from their urns." The literature of a people not only expresses and reports, reveals and registers, its inward life, its conceptions of God and duty, its aspirations and

failures, its faith and victory; but it also feeds and enriches that life, adds whole areas of thought and imagination to it, gives it wings to roam over the past and into the future, and illumines the chequered and chaotic present with the radiance of eternal law and inflexible principle. The Record multiplies the power of a Revelation a thousandfold!

Therefore, not only did God *speak* to the Hebrew fathers, but He also secured the preservation of His "words" and "deeds" from age to age; sometimes by cutting His commands with many a deep incision into the hard and enduring stone;* sometimes by the repetition of the sacred message from father to son, and to son's son;† sometimes by the express direction, "Write this in a book," either to supply the needs of the eager disciples of prophecy, or for the continuous instruction of the people generally in the ways of God;‖ sometimes by placarding religious manifestoes concerning public events on the walls of the city streets;§ and sometimes by the publication of oracles formerly delivered in public, or issued for the first time, reporting what the prophet has seen and heard and felt, as he was stirred and moved by the Holy Ghost.¶ Thus the Old Testament grew from its original germ little by little, bit by bit, until it became in

* Exodus xxiv. 4-12. † Deuteronomy vi. 4-9. ‖ Isaiah viii. 16.

§ Isaiah viii. 1—R. V., reads "tablet" instead of "roll." The message was written in large letters on a tablet, or large "poster," to catch the eye of the wayfarer. Cheyne suggests that the tablet was probably made of wood, polished with wax, and, he adds, it was to be set up in public. It was the prophet-statesman's message on the political occurrences of the day.

¶ Hosea. Isaiah. Jeremiah. &c

its latest form the great Hebrew Library, the matchless world-storehouse of the literary masterpieces of a divinely-inspired community, concerning its God-given laws, its God-revealing historical annals, its God-adoring psalms and hymns, elegy and lyric, idyll and drama, its God-serving priestly lore, its fine, peerless, practical wisdom, and its rich, chastened, fervid, and far-reaching prophecy.

The *Law* came by Moses, and by Moses it was preserved. I need not say he did not write all the five Books that bear his name. That appears on the face of the record, as well as in the fragments of the world's earliest literature, gathered from the work of the "holy prophets, who have been since the world began;"* but it is evident the living and eternal elements of the Pentateuch are mainly Mosaic and its "Ten Words" form "the granite substratum of the whole Bible." Joshua, the minister of and successor to Moses, enlarges the revealed store, and adds to "the book of the law of the Lord."† References to the lost book of *Jasher*, and "the book of the wars of the Lord," indicate the service of various anonymous authors in the growth of Revelation.‖ Samuel, the pupil of Eli, was himself a trainer of men, and the founder of the school of the prophets, and it is not unlikely that he placed the Mosaic literature in the hands of his disciples in an enlarged form. How David enriched it by the gift of song, and Solomon by his wise sayings, is well known; a school of singers starting from the impulse of the first,

* Luke i. 70. † Joshua xxiv. 26-28.

‖ Joshua x. 13; 2 Samuel i. 18; Numbers xxi. 14. The book of *Jasher* is said by an ever-inventive tradition to have perished in the days of the captivity, but Dr. Donaldson has attempted to reconstruct it out of the contents of our Bible

supplying the *Five Books of Psalms*, and a school of meditative philosophers from the second, producing the Book of *Job*, the collection of *Proverbs*, the colloquies of *Ecclesiastes*, and the love strains of the *Canticles*.* But it is to "the glorious company of the prophets," to Joel and Hosea, Amos and Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and their inspired comrades and successors, we owe the largest and richest developments of the Holy Book. Next to them in serviceableness comes the work of that great Bible editor, Ezra, "*the* Scribe," "prepared to study the law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach it in Israel,"† and who not only led the way in religious reform after the Exile, but gathered together, arranged, and completed, the body of Revelation up to his date. Finally, the voice of the prophets having ceased, and the bonds of religious unity in Israel being all put out of sight, the last sayings of the prophets were added to those of the first, the songs of the inspired poets were put into five books, and the Old Scripture reached the form of which Paul said of it, that it was "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." ‖

* Speaking of the "Wisdom Literature" of the Hebrews, Ewald says: "It first manifested itself in special circles of the people, while in the age after Solomon, which was peculiarly favourable to it, eagerly inquisitive scholars gathered around individual masters, until ever-increasing schools were formed." Quoted by Delitszch, Proverbs i. 40.

† Ezra vii. 10.

‖ "The Exile, which robbed Israel of every other inheritance, gave increased value and authority to the written word." *Ency. Brit.* Art. Hebrew Language and Literature. *Cf.* Plumptre, *Biblical Essays*, 259, *et seq.* Prof. Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 55, 158-167.

It is a long story of divine growth, and alas! for us, we know very little about it. Here and there we see a book, as it were, growing in a prophet's mind, and can trace the successive stages of its development; but for the most part the divine seed "grows secretly," and comes to its harvest "without observation." Yet we know enough to forbid our thinking and reasoning as though our Old Testament had been shot out of one of the bookseller's shops in Paternoster Row yesterday morning, full and complete from the first and for evermore! More than fifteen hundred years that book was growing. More than thirty different workers contributed to this unfolding of the divine mind! More than half-a-dozen different "editions," to speak in the current speech of the day, appeared! And oh! what would not we give for a glimpse of the actual roll put into the hands of young Samuel! How the heart would leap to see the Davidic edition of "the law of the Lord" about which he sang with such glowing rapture! What an epoch would be made if we could come upon the veritable "copy" that Ezra read when he stood in his pulpit of wood! What student of religion would not experience a new rapture at the sight of the Bible of the Maccabees! John Ruskin, speaking to the students at Oxford said, as he lifted a scrap of paper, "I show you a leaf of the Bible which your own King Alfred saw with his own bright eyes and from which he learned his child-like faith in the days of dawning thought;"* would there not be an unwonted sacredness about a leaf of the actual scriptures used by Mary in teaching the holy child

* *The Pleasures of England*, p. 148.

Jesus the law of God! And should we not find a quickened interest as we gazed on those "sacred writings" from which Timothy, under the guidance of his grand-mother Lois, and his mother Eunice, learned "those things which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus!"

(4) But though we know nothing of these successive editions of the Hebrew Scripture; we are sure of this, that as a *Book*, not merely as Revelation, in its written and literary form as a Record, and not only in its original inspiration by the Holy Spirit, it has been one of the main channels of divine force, and accomplished an entirely unique mission in the education and regeneration of men. From the very first and in its earliest stages of growth it was essentially reproductive. The earlier seeds of Revelation aided in the growth and fruitage of the later. Books make books. There is a continuity in the life of literature, and a genealogy of the books of the Bible. Malachi is indebted to Moses, Joel lives in Zechariah and in Peter, Habakkuk reappears in Paul, James alludes to Job, Jeremiah appropriates the sayings of Isaiah, and the productive mind of the son of Amoz is fertilized by his seniors. John, of the Apocalypse, dips his brush in the colours of Daniel and Ezekiel. Hosea is a father amongst the prophets. Elisha rejoices in his descent from Elijah. The New Testament, as everyone knows, is rich in allusion to, and quotation from, the Old; and the latest books of the Hebrew Library draw largely from the earlier. The prophets of God grew strong by fellowship with one

another through the records of the Divine dealings with Israel.

Little vainglorious souls are afraid of citing the works of others, lest somebody should presume to think they themselves are not absolutely original. Really capable minds, instead of shrinking from quotation, delight in it. One, who is rarely, if ever, surpassed in the beauty and finish of his style, or the fineness of his thought, says, "the greatest is he who has been oftenest aided," and Ruskin's own works are sown with allusions and quotations like the sky with stars. Another, who, in my judgment, is the freshest and most suggestive thinker this century has seen, has, according to his biographer, nearly four thousand allusions to, or quotations from eight hundred and sixty-eight different individuals; and he says, "All minds quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote." *

Few writers show their self-abnegation and dependence upon one another more than the authors of the Old Testament. Take a signal instance. No man surpasses Isaiah in splendour of genius, wealth of idea, brilliance of imagery, sublimity of eloquence, and grandeur of faith; and yet he builds on the basis of Exodus and Deuteronomy, illuminates his teaching from the Psalms, inserts long passages from the earlier prophets, uses Hosea and Amos, his predecessors, takes the text of his latter-day vision from Micah the Morashtite, and makes such frequent references to *Job*, as to suggest to one of our acuter critics that the

* *Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes, p. 384.

actual sufferings of the Man of Uz furnished the materials for that dark-bright picture of the Man of Sorrows in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which is the perennial charm of his book.*

Nor did the reproductiveness of the Divine Word cease with Malachi in the prophecy of the Old Testament, or with John in the spiritual Gospel of the New. Wheresoever it has gone, it has vindicated itself by its fruitfulness in unfolding the spiritual life and mental fertility of men, as the Word of God, which liveth and abideth and increaseth for ever. Like the river of Ezekiel, it has given life to everything it has touched. Our own and other literatures owe their higher spiritual qualities to its presence, and derive their quickening influence on *conduct* from its ideas and powers; and to this very hour it is at work amongst us, slowly but surely assimilating to its pure ethical spirit the best minds and the best books of the age.†

Here then, Bible-readers, is one of the truest uses to which we can put our sacred books. Shame on us! if we are content to repeat these words, to fling "odds and ends" of sentences about in debate, to draw our theological weapons

* "Isaiah is as dependent on his less famous predecessors as a Marlowe or a Shakespeare."—Cheyne, *Isa.* ii. 217. For proof of the above statements as to Isaiah, see Cheyne's Essay on the Parallelisms of Isaiah. *Cf.* Bateson-Wright on *Job* for quotations on Job; and indeed recent expositions of the Old Testament Books generally. For now-a-days no exposition of a Biblical Book is complete that does not trace the relations of its ideas to preceding and subsequent literature.

It is one of the drawbacks of the Revised Version of the Old Testament that it has not set in ordinary quotation signs the citations with which the books abound.

† *Cf.* Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible, by C. Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrew's.

from them as from an armoury of texts ; and fail to keep in and before the world the continuity of *inspiration*, by "receiving with meekness the implanted word which is able to save our souls," and to re-deliver and re-plant it with such consoling energy, sweet reasonableness, and convincing persuasiveness, that men shall feel it to be the very message of God. Shame on us ! if it cannot be said, as of old, "The word of the Lord grew and was multiplied." It is Divine seed. What is the harvest ? Do the sorrowing find the promises of God exceeding sweet and precious as we repeat them, bathed with the fervours of our own experience ? Are the hungry satisfied as with the Bread of Life when we distribute what the Master Himself has given to us ? O ! that the living word may have free course, and be glorified in souls themselves made alive by Christ Jesus.

(5) For the object of the Old Testament, equally with the New, is to "admonish every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that every man may be presented perfect in, and according to, the pattern, Christ Jesus ;" to make a completely equipped spiritual manhood, a nature furnished with every force of intellect and heart, conscience and will, motive and impulse, aim and ideal, for every good work the whole course of human life may require. Complete manhood, perfectly and exhaustlessly adequate for the noblest and most beneficent living is the final goal of every Scripture inspired of God.

(*a*) This is true of its fragments. The different parts of the record of Revelation are not like separate stones, which are of no use till placed in the society of their fellows, and crowned

with the top-stone of the super-structure. Each one is a living seed, yielding its appropriate and perpetual harvests. The first words are not like the first works of a watch, valueless until the last parts of the mechanism are produced. Each is an incorruptible germ, developing organically from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, and from youth far beyond, in ever-enlarging harvests of moral manhood for the world.

True, the clearer and fuller the Revelation, the richer the manhood it produces. As the Bible grows the man grows. Moses is greater than Abraham. Samuel surpasses Samson. David towers far above the last of the Judges. There is a splendour of holiness in Isaiah we do not see in the sweet singer of Israel. And Christ Jesus Himself, the Son of Man, is the greatest and perfectest of all.

Still, it was not necessary the edifice of Revelation should be finished before it was profitable for teaching, for correction, for reproof and instruction, which is in righteousness. Indeed, its earlier forms were specially adapted to the earlier need, and each part, as it took its place on the shelves of the Hebrew Library, fulfilled its formative work in the moral life of the world.

Men sometimes talk as though the usefulness of a book depended on the number of its pages and the quantity of its contents. Professor Newman complained, some years ago, against our Bible, because it does not tell every father to what business or profession he should put his sons. For such infinite particulars, and detailed advices, we should require not a portable manual, but a British Museum. Far wiser and truer is the principle enunciated by the orator Burke,

when he says, "Reading, and much reading, is good. But the power of diversifying the matter infinitely in your own mind, and of applying it to every occasion that arises, is far better; so don't suppress the living force." Bulk is no test of educational power. The exalted moral position of the Hebrew people in the ancient world is proof abundant that a few simple, central, and fundamental ideas concerning God and duty, willingly received and widely applied, are unspeakably profitable for teaching, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be completely furnished for all good works.

But the most signal illustration of the unequalled serviceableness of the Old Book is in Him, Who, in the fiercest crisis of His experience, used it as His chief weapon in repelling His assailant, protecting His threatened purity, maintaining an attitude of complete self-suppression, and advancing forward in His work as the Redeemer of the world, and the Reformer and Recreator of Religion. Think of it! He, the mightiest amongst the mighty, and the purest amongst the pure, builds up His strong, sinless, harmonious, conquering, and perfect character, by the aid of these Jewish writings. The strong Son of God, immortal love, nourishes His spotless and inimitable manhood with the sweet strains of David's harp, the plaintive songs of Asaph, the moral maxims of Solomon, the fore-gleams of a brightening and all-reconciling future shot from the serene and penetrating spirit of Isaiah, the pictures of the march of the world and the succession of empires painted by Daniel, and the revelations of Moses and Abraham. The first and chief of all the sons of men, the "Son of Man," the crown and flower of humanity,

constructs and sustains His goodness, fosters His faith, perfects His obedience, and secures His victory over self and Satan, by the splendid support of these old-world tracts—this encyclopædia of Hebrew literature, which some of us are tempted to put aside as worn out, effete, and unrelated to our present necessities.

The Old Testament is a prime factor in the education of Jesus. Of Greek culture, as Renan himself says, He knew nothing. Whatever He was, and whatever He achieved, He was, and did, without the feeblest stimulus from that incomparable store of world-influence, the poetry and philosophy, eloquence and history, art and statesmanship, of Greece. Not Socrates, the moralist, but Samuel, the seer; not Pericles, the orator and political leader, but Isaiah, the apostolic prophet; not Phidias, the famous sculptor, but David, the royal poet and true saint; not Homer, the blind old muse, but Moses, the man of God, were the masters of the school in which the Son of Mary "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." The years of quiet study and tranquil meditation he passed under the peaceful direction of His thoughtful and sweet-spirited mother made Him so familiar with their ideas, and instinct with their spirit, and charged with their facts, that they were a vital part of His being; their grand purpose He breathed; their absolute faith in the future of humanity He felt; their fine serenity and fulness of joy He possessed; their revelation of the unity of all ages, and of all workers, of law and prophecy and psalm, of Moses and David and Daniel, He rejoiced in; and, therefore, could gladly say as He dedicated Himself to His redeeming work, "Lo! I come; in the

volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O God ;" and Paul, gazing back on His peerless beauty and measureless service to men, could cite Him as the unique "Man of God, furnished completely unto every good work."

Nor was this literary worker discharged from service with the arrival of the fuller and clearer Christian Revelation ! Discharged ! It was the most effective instrument in the Christian propaganda. It had gone everywhere preparing the way. The dispersion of the Jews was the distribution of the Scriptures, and accomplished for the world at the advent of Christ what the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society has wrought for it in these later years. The student who sat at the feet of Gamaliel ; Timothy who was made wise to salvation, Cornelius at prayer in Cæsarea, are typical illustrations and verified prophecies of the wide-spread efficiency and continuous usefulness of the Old Testament in accelerating the progress of "the glorious gospel of the happy God." Modern instances vie in interest with the ancient. The great Puritan Revival is due in no small degree to the baptism of the Elder Scripture. The Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, in 1638, was fashioned on the pattern of Jewish proceedings in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. Calvin derived his Genevan legislation, not from the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul, but from Moses and the prophets. Savonarola drew his inspiration for his noble and self-sacrificing reforms in Florence from the same exhaustlessly vital source.* And

* "Not till a year later, 1484, did the thought take birth in him which, fully worked out, furnished guidance for all his future life.

in the *Jewish Chronicle*, of the first of May of this year, a writer says, "The holy writings have always been the centre of our spiritual life. New ideas and fresh incitements to virtue are ever drawn from the sacred text."

(*b*) But its influence as a book has not only been manifested in the nurture of noble and kingly spirits, the elect souls of all ages; but also, and signally, in the establishment of a national fellowship, a real brotherhood of interest and aspiration, of sentiment and service. The Jews owe their indestructible vitality and unity as a people,* not to purity of race—that is a figment that ought to be suffered to perish; not simply to persecution—though that has fused them together; but to the Divine magnetism of their Revelation. Losing their visible bond of cohesion, the land of their fathers, and being without king and without temple, and without sacrificing priest, the Divine Book has been the one central magnet holding the particles of Judaism together though scattered all over the world. In its God every Jew has found a common dwelling-place; in its hopes a solace, in its ethics the guide of his life, in its songs his inspiration, and in its prayers the language of devotion. It has been the standard for

Reading the Old Testament assiduously, and seeking to penetrate its hidden meanings, there dawned upon him the vision of a conformity between the history of Israel and of Florence. Surely the ages of wickedness, which had brought forth prophets, had their counterpart in his own times; and, since the Divine power was unchanging, the Divine voice might make itself heard. So, when a vision appeared to him, he was ready to set it down to the inspiration of God. The revelation which thus visited his dreams portrayed the calamities which should befall the corrupt Church, and the reform which was to follow, while a voice commanded him to go and preach these things to the people."—Ellen Watson, G. A. Buckland, 235.

* *Cf.* Renan. *Le Judaïsme comme Race et comme Religion.*

which all would fight, the *Magna Charta* which rallied all hearts, the fuel keeping alive faith in the invisible God, and glowing fellowship with one another.

The growth and perfecting of this Hebrew unity through an overflowing and glorious passion for the Law of God, shine out with arresting brilliance in the later contributions to the Old Testament. Song after song beats and throbs with the intensest affection for the revelation of God. Prayer follows prayer, soaring on the wings of faith and hope to the Great Revealer. "Oh, how love I Thy law," exclaims an enraptured soul in an outburst of enthusiasm; while another pathetically pleads, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold the wonders of Thy law." Affectionate labour and willing toil could scarcely go further in pleased ingenuity and accumulated device, than they do in the curiously wrought one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, wherein the statutes and judgments, precepts and teachings of the law of the Lord are made the occasion of celebrating the glorious consolation and infinite fruitfulness of Holy Scripture. Yes, brothers, we Christians and Jews, as well as Christians and Christians, shall get to unity in our religious life in the degree in which we are filled and fired with this all-swaying passion for the truth of God, breathe the spirit of our *whole* Revelation, feel the absolute unity of the law that came by Moses with the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, and dedicate ourselves, first and mainly, body, soul and spirit, to complete equipment for every good work. Our miserable sectarianisms will be burned up in the fires of a love of the law of God. The barriers erected by the builders of mere opinion will have no place in the One Kingdom God has been building

through all the generations. The long-desired, and long-since revealed brotherhood of man, as the enriched sons of the one living and Eternal God, will become the basis of our fellowship, and the inspiration and law of our behaviour. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the visible centre of human unity, the true bond of human fellowship, the great Charter of Human Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!

(*c*) Nor does the power of this ancient book rest here; but its imperishable vitality is manifest in its efficiency as an agent of *religious revival*. Reformations in religion, both for individuals and peoples, have been coincident with the re-awakening and deepening of interest in the sacred scriptures. As far back as the time of the reforming King Josiah, the re-discovery of the Roll of the law of the Lord is associated with a prodigious impact to the movement for a freshened presentation of religious truth, a purer worship, and a higher morality.* Ezra perfected and crowned his work of political and religious reform by the systematic reading, clear translation, and forcible interpretation of the Mosaic records to the people recently returned from captivity. Christianity itself starts into life amid the persistent and diligent efforts of the Jews to understand their sacred books. "Ye search the Scriptures," said Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life." Paul challenged the open-minded Bereans to the strenuous use of the most valid and satisfactory test of truth in existence so that they might verify the claims of the gospel he preached. The Greek mind laid hold of Christianity and influenced its development through Clement of Alexandria,

* 2 Kings xxii. 8.

and the learned Origen ; the latter a student of Scripture, whose patience, energy, and devotion, were only surpassed by the spiritual reproductiveness of his work.* Jerome led the way in the Western Church in a more thorough investigation of the Scripture, revised the existing Latin versions, sent out the *Vulgate*, and thereby nourished the life and enlarged the activities of the Church. Mediæval missions drew their breath from the inspiring Word, and found it, as we are still doing, the most capable instrument, next to the voice and heart of the living missionary. John Wycliffe laid the foundation of the Reformation in England on the basis of Revelation ; John Huss victoriously warred against Romanism with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ; Erasmus, exalted to the highest pinnacle of knowledge, opened the minds of the learned to the light of the New Testament ; and Martin Luther found in this "one book" the living principle and abiding power for the greatest revolution of modern times.† So it has always been, and, therefore, standing as we do before a new era, with the *Revised Version* of both Testaments in our hands, we dare to forecast a near future in which more light will stream forth from God's holy Word, a more vivid realization of its exhaustless wealth will be secured, fuller sway given to its

* Pressense's *Martyrs and Apologists of Christianity*, p. 305. Neander's *Church History*, iii., 497, Bohn's edition.

† *The Bible in many Lands* says of the Syriac version of the Sacred Scriptures—"The multiplication of copies of the Word of God by the British and Foreign Bible Society was followed by the speedy substitution of vital godliness for a merely outward orthodoxy of profession." The Bible is the true panacea for a corrupt Christianity, and the best bulwark of a holy religion.

radiant catholicity, and a wider application made of its redeeming and regenerating social principles.

(*d*) Time fails me to speak of the *book* as the Divinely-ordered instrument of domestic education, the friend and guide of Hebrew childhood, the chief building tool of the teacher of the young,* the shield and defence of personal purity, the inspiration to alms-giving and charity, and the creator of personal and national liberty. Let it suffice to affirm that the more fully the story of the doings of the Elder Scriptures in their book-form are known, the deeper will be our gratitude to their Creator, the more assiduous, individual, and thorough, our effort to get at their original and real meaning, the warmer our affection for their precious treasures, and the firmer our faith that "every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

(6) But, dear friends, I should be unfaithful to my knowledge of your difficulties and perplexities if I did not remember that this very Old Testament, which has wrought so mightily for the welfare of humanity, and been to so many a schoolmaster leading to Christ, has become in these later days a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence, by the mistaken claims set up concerning its contents, and the false reading given of its character. As I am obliged to know from abundant resources, these Scriptures are a hindrance instead of a help, another difficulty in life to be

* Deut. vi. 4-9; Psalm lxxviii. 1-6.

solved, rather than a key to the solution of other problems; a source of confusion and mischief to Christianity instead of an explanation of its history and an aid to its clearer apprehension and heartier practice.

"I can believe," it has been said to me, "in the New Testament, in its God of overflowing love and mercy, its superlative ethical idea, its unbroken unselfishness, its splendid ardour for purity of spirit, its total abolition of all meretricious divisions between man and man, its energetic impact to good-doing, and its unashamed proclamation of the rights and privileges of the spirit of man; but the Old Testament bewilders and appals me. You don't think I need accept it. Its 'ethics' are often low, sometimes base, and occasionally revolting; its 'miracles' are trifling and unworthy; its contradictions are glaring and amazing; and its God is hard and harsh, confused and confusing, anger flashing from His eye, a sword glittering in His hand, doom on His lips, and a blind partiality for one race the mark of His rule. It is too much; I cannot credit it."

In response to such frank and mistaken allegations much has to be said which I cannot now repeat; but I will give four advices which I have tested again and again, and of whose solidity and value I have unimpeachable witness.

(*a*) Do not forget that whatever the Old Scripture is now, *it has done good work.* It made the first and finest manhood of the world; and this it did as it is, and with all its present contents. The fact is not to be denied, and such signal utility ought not to be forgotten.

(*b*) *Treat the Hebrew Bible as Christ did.* He came to men at a time when the *book* was idolized as the pearl of great price, more precious than rubies, "more to be desired

than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." The persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the fearful afflictions that followed, gave a special value to this possession, and forced it into the position of history and law-book, prayer-book and hymn-book, horn-book and worship-book, indeed, the one book, the all and in all of the people. They copied it and re-copied it, counted its letters, protected its interpretation, and were the veriest bondsmen of its external form ; whilst its living spirit and its leading idea were far from them. It was a perilous time for a student of the Revelation of God, and in few points does Christ Jesus reveal His victorious sense and His keen insight more convincingly than in His attitude towards the book that had helped to make Him, and was still His weapon against evil, His solace in sorrow, and His companion in service. He approached it with boundless reverence and love ; but dealt with it freely and frankly, corrected and superseded its ethical teaching in details, showing that some of its provisions were transitory, and were due to "the hardness of men's hearts," * and asserted the continuity of spiritual illumination and progress. He is silent concerning the inspiration of every word the books contain ; never vouches for the literal infallibility of the sayings of Satan and Bildad, Zophar and Elihu ; could not, and did not, maintain the perfectness of the earlier morality of the Hebrews ; distinctly and vehemently rejects the Satanic literalism that treats the Bible as though it were made up of detached texts ; insists on the study of the *whole* drift and current of Revelation when He rebuts His adversary's

* Matthew xix. 8. *Cf.* also Acts xvii. 30.

shafts of citations with the words, "It is written again," and "AGAIN;" and finally He fills in its outlines of truth, develops its germs, exemplifies its principles, and realizes in Himself its grand ideal. Meet the Old Testament in that spirit of profound reverence, warm affection, frank trust, and thorough-going practicality, and instead of being a binding fetter it will be an emancipating friend, and where it was a stone of stumbling it will be a mount where God is seen, and the seeing soul is transfigured.

(*e*) A fresh source of guidance opens to many of us in the attitude taken by the apostles, at once to the book they revered and loved, and to the Master they worshipped and served. Pervaded by His spirit, they caught His practical methods of Biblical study, and held aloft not only the supreme ethical uses of the law and the prophets, but also the educational services they were capable of rendering to the Jewish pupils of Christianity. Not for a moment, however, did they sink the *Christ* below the *book*, or exalt the letter above the Spirit. Not one of them so much as dreamt of saying, "Believe in the story of creation and thou shalt be saved;" "Believe in the universality of the deluge or thou shalt be condemned;" "Believe that the ass of Balaam spake with the voice of a man and thou shalt enter into life;" "Believe that the axe-head swam in the river, or without doubt thou shall perish everlastingly;" "Believe in the matchless morality of Jael and find salvation;" "Believe in the immaculacy of every deed recorded and enjoined in Hebrew history, or thou shalt be lost." Such reasoning never fell on the horizon of their thoughts, and their spirit and method are proof invincible that they would have resented the slightest

approach to such "dominion over faith." It is the men of to-day who talk after that fashion, and, in effect, exalt human theory above Christ, and make the acceptance of dogmatic opinions the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven. The apostles proclaimed with one united voice "Christ, and Him crucified;" Christ, and Him exalted; the life and hope of mankind. The substance of their message was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Christ, and not a *book*, or worse still, a theory about a book, was the alpha and omega of their ministry.

Let us follow their order, for order is vital. Christ must have the precedence. Suppose I believe all miracle, accept the dogma of the mechanical infallibility of every word in the Bible, which took the place of the older dogma of the infallibility of the Pope; and have not faith in and love for Christ, it profiteth me nothing. But if Christ Himself has cast His gracious spell over me, and my heart yields to His infinite charms, then, indeed, will His good Spirit guide me into all truth, and open my eyes for everything contained in His law.

What, then! Is not the Old Testament inspired? Assuredly, and in every way, and to a degree that makes it unrivalled and unique in the religious literature of the world! The whole inspiration of the one God is here; intellectual inspiration in its truth and philosophy; imaginative inspiration, in its poetry and song; ethical inspiration in its growing and full morality; religious and revealing inspiration in its manifestation of the Eternal God and Father, Saviour and Sanctifier of men. But inspiration is not and cannot be external and mechanical, a matter of parchments and pages, of letters and type; it

is of the spirit and of the man ; the work of the Holy God moving in the hearts of men.

Never, therefore, may we sanction the anti-apostolic method of insisting on the acceptance of a *theory* of the "*how*" of inspiration as the portal to the Kingdom of Holy Scripture. That is a poor house, indeed, where the door-step and the knocker are the best possessions they boast, and the only inspiration they know. The real inspiration of the home is in the beauty of character of father and mother, son and daughter, mistress and servant, in their kindly con sideration, broad sympathies, and wide interests. So we must feel the inspiration of the Bible as a *book*, after we have felt the magnetic power of its supreme personalities, and chiefly *after* the Christ of both Testaments has been lifted up before us as the One Great Yearning of Humanity in the olden time, and the One Complete Satisfaction of Humanity in the later time, and so has drawn us to trust Himself; and then the ideas and principles and facts of Revelation fall into their true perspective, and are seen in their true relations, gradual unfolding, and final capability to illumine and save lost man. We may dwell on the door-steps of theory for ever, and be starved. It is free and loving fellowship with the Divine Host Who sits and welcomes us into the many-mansioned home of Revelation that fills us with the fullest faith in the divinity of the edifice He has reared.*

* It ought never to be forgotten that it is only in recent times the theory has gained ground which represents inspiration as an *external* influence, infallibly guaranteeing man against confusion, error, and contradiction, and constituting the Bible from Genesis to Revelation not only the Word of God, but the actual, literal, and unerring words of God. and of no one else. This is a post-Reformation invention

(*d*) The fact is, we have injected our false fears and foolish misgivings and subtle unbelief into our treatment of the Word of God. We have trembled for it, as though it could not defend itself. We have defended it—a policy as necessary and as wise, as elaborate defences of the sun when he is filling the earth with his golden beauty, and storing the granaries of the world with his harvests. The Bible asks no favour from anybody. If it is not the best book for making manhood after the Divine pattern, then we *ought* to give it up for that which is better; fidelity to its teaching demands that we elect the Best. It stands or falls by its ethical values. It appeals to its moral and spiritual results. Try it by that test, and it is content. Try it fearlessly, boldly. Believe it to the extent you see and know it to be true. Follow it whithersoever it goes,

(see Prof. Ladd's *Doctrine of Scripture*, ii. 182), and it is a heresy of measureless mischief. It is contradicted on the face of the record; for the Bible contains the falsehoods of Satan as well as the truth of God; the glowing annals of martyrdom contradicting the diabolical assertion that "all that a man has will he give for his life" (Job ii. 5). It is asserted by the opponents of the Bible with suspicious iteration, R. Ingersoll saying, "It will not do to say that it is not verbally inspired. If the words are not inspired, what is?" And so on this inspired-knocker theory he proceeds to show, of course, that no inspiration of any sort is possible or actual. Writers whose "orthodoxy" is as much beyond question as the extent of their learning, and the devoutness and reverence of their spirit, say, "The purely organic (that is mechanical) theory of inspiration rests on no Scriptural authority, and if we except a few ambiguous metaphors, is supported by no historical testimony. It is at variance with the whole form and fashion of the Bible, and it is destitute of all that is holiest in man and highest in religion."—Canon Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 5. "It is a secondary consideration, and a question on which we may safely agree to differ, whether every book of the Old Testament was written so completely under the dictation of God's Holy Spirit, that every word, not only doctrinal but also historical and scientific, must be infallibly correct and true."—*The Christian Religion*, by Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, p. 41. *Cf. The Theory of Inspiration, or Why Men do not believe the Bible*, by Rev. J. M. Wilson, M.A.

and if it misleads you, then give it up forthwith. James Hinton says, "I find the Bible the secret of all truth ; all I know I derive from it ; and yet I would say to every man Don't believe the Bible, if you cannot see clearly that it is true. Deal freely, boldly, by it. Don't be afraid. 'Tis a friend, not an enemy. If you don't treat it straightforwardly it cannot do service to you." *

For myself, I am obliged to accept with greater heartiness every year I live the poetical and beautiful saying that "the Bible is the god of books." All I can get to know of other literature only makes this matchless production more precious. Every glimpse I have had of the sacred Bibles of other peoples, of the *Koran* of the Mohammedans, of the *Zendavesta* of the Persians, of the *Vedas* of the Buddhists, of the *King* of the Chinese, only makes more manifest the unapproachable superiority of our Testaments in their idea of God, fulness of Revelation, originality of statement of religious truth, fitness for universal man, victorious treatment of sin, and emphasis of the moral element in life and character. No Scripture gives such cogent proof that it is inspired of God to teach, reprove, correct, and completely equip men for being and doing good.

Following in the footsteps of Christ and the apostles, the "difficulties of the Old Testament" lose their obstinate character, and gradually disappear altogether from the

* James Hinton's Life, p. 214. Joseph Cook says, "Shut the door on enquiry, and doubt always comes in at the window. Let investigation proceed; let the Old Testament be examined as thoroughly as the New has been; let theories of development be applied to it as they have been to the New."—*Boston Monday Lectures, Occident*, p. 99.

horizon of practical life. I am no longer surprised at the presence of a lower morality, a dim conception of God, and a confused apprehension of His messages, in the gradual and historical unfolding of the Divine Idea and Purpose *to* men, and *in* men, and *by* men. I expect them. The dim light of early morn is not the splendour of mid-day. Revelation is a progress, and it is only when Christ has come in "the fulness of time" that we are completely set free from the defects incident to all work touched by the spirit of man.

Ah! brothers, the urgent need is not for theory, but for practice; for the diligent and loving study of the Word. We read it too hurriedly, catch at its texts, and haste away to the busy world unaffected by their power. We want to sit, like an artist before a landscape, until the spell of its beauty is on us, and all its revelation suffuses us, and we ourselves, inspired by its ideas and principles and spirit, become living proofs of the everlastingly-inspiring power of the inspired Scripture.

O God of the Bible! Thou art our Father! Thou wilt be mindful of us! Thou art the *living* God! Speak to our hearts, we implore Thee! Fill us with Thy Spirit, that we may be led into the knowledge and practise of all Thy truth! AMEN.

"OH, the little birds sang east, the little birds sang west!
And I said, in underbreath, all our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?
Oh, the little birds sang east, the little birds sang west!
And I smiled to think God's goodness flows around our incompleteness;
Round our restlessness He's rest!"

Mrs. E. B. Browning.

"We ask God to forgive us for our evil thoughts and tempers, but rarely, if ever, ask Him to forgive us for our sadness. Joy is regarded as a happy accident of the Christian life, an ornament and luxury, rather than a duty."

Dr. Dale.

"Not to hate anything but sin; to be full of love to every creature; to be frightened at nothing; to be sure that all things will turn to good; not to mind pain or loss, because it is our Father's will; to know that nothing—no, not if the earth was to be burned up, or the waters come and drown us,—nothing could part us from God Who loves us, and Who fills our souls with peace and joy, because we are sure that whatever He wills is holy, just, and good."

George Eliot.

The Joy of God the Strength of Men.

"For the joy of the Lord is your strength."
—*Nehemiah* viii. 10.

Of all the manifold sources of Strength for a Daily Living of the Best Life laid open and accessible to us in the pages of the *Old Testament*, not one is so sunny and inspiring as the deep and serene joyousness of the Lord and Saviour of our lives.

For this reason, and for the manifest fitness of the theme for such a place, I have reserved it for the close of this series of Old Testament illustrations of our chosen motto, "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

I. *Ezra* felt the unique power of the nation's literature. For him it contained all that is best for men to do, and happiest to desire. Therefore, he and his fellow-reformers were "the men of the book" of the law of the Lord, using

it as "the man of their counsel," a fount of refreshing, a goad to penitence, and a stimulus to faith, generosity, and joy.

Men "are saved by hope" from the utter prostration of acute despair, and the folly of surrender to aggravated failure. God-taught souls never finally close the eye on that Star of humanity's morning, the long-desired and long-promised advent of Divine deliverance and victory. The *Messiah-Idea* never dies, but with the sun renews its light, and shines for ever in the sky of our mortal life.

An unsullied conscience is to *Job* a stronghold of power, and the steadfast purity of the Eternal a sure refuge for persecuted and afflicted souls; wherefore the hero of Uz fights for his integrity with death-defying ardour and impetuosity, shouting as he springs from height to height of the jagged rocks of duty and suffering, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Ezekiel and Isaiah are humbled and exalted by visions of the burning holiness and resistless power of God; and interpret what they have seen to souls lamenting their sin and weakness with such penetrating energy and skill, that they are the messengers of glad tidings to those that sit solitary and desolate, and the harbingers of deliverance to those who are ready to perish. *The Gospel of the Exile* finds in them its chief apostles.

Elijah and *Joseph* swiftly solved their life-problems, fearlessly bore their witness to truth, and wrought righteousness by the perfect "practice of the presence of God." That is the sum of their religion and worship, and the key to their sovereignty over themselves and over men.

David graduates in the school of personal difficulty and

failure, under the leadership of the ministry of nature and life, and learns to sing with soothing sweetness and refreshing tenderness, that the mercy of God is the strength and solace of every penitent heart.

Samuel and Samson grow strong by wise motherly culture, self-denying vows, strenuous obedience, and a present-day inspiration.

Naomi and Ruth witness to the salutary services of sorrow, the immense educational forces of human love, the purifying and exalting power of woman, and the unequalled mission of the Home for the redemption and renewal of the moral and spiritual life of the world.

"Trained in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians," and in the purer wisdom and higher learning of the God of all men, *Moses* promulgates a holier law, preaches a clearer revelation, establishes a more perfect order, and creates a diviner society for the strengthening and upbuilding of men.

Jacob, with much pain, wandering along devious paths, and after many a self-inflicted defeat, learns at last that real prayer moves the heart that moves the world, and that the thorough service of God is greater gain than comes to all the falsehoods and tricks of scheming brains.

To *Abraham* is this grace given, even to show that in the saddest, darkest day of life, God is an all-sufficient protection from ourselves and from the worst effects of our "mistakes," and is withal a glorious recompense at its close, according to the saying, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

But the crowning Revelation of God in Old Testament times is given to that political reformer who, coming up

from the land of Exile to re-create and renew the people of the Lord, cheers and inspirits them with the assurance that God overflows with delight in His chosen, works out their salvation in a festal mood, and commissions them to minister to each other's necessities with ungrudging bounty and a deathless hope; "for," says he, "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

II. God is infinite; and no man, nay, not all men, can express Him. He is beyond us and above us; higher than our highest thought; greater than the widest sweep of our research; richer than our fullest estimate; but *every* true soul may say something about Him, and every nature He trains by His spirit may either add something of freshness of setting and force of applicability to an old truth, or open for some soul new glimpses of His wondrous fulness.

John the Baptist is greater than all men born of woman, and yet the *least* in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he; greater in his relationships, in his conceptions of the Rule of God, and in his accessibility to the fitness of the divine Inspirations. High thoughts do not disdain lowly minds. Sublime conceptions do not shrink from dwelling with and irradiating the spirits of the contrite. The ascent to the loftiest ranges of light and power is given, not to a prophet like the seraphic Isaiah, nor to a singing poet like David, nor to a great leader like Moses, but to *Nehemiah*, a courtier and a statesman, a politician and a Reformer. Too often we judge the world as though its best life were mirrored in the pages of sneering and obsequious reviewers, or in the infallible verdicts of blatant newspapers, or the loud self-assertion of self-seeking

politicians, or the noisy fame of crowned kings and mitred ecclesiastics! It is not thus! Most gladdening and inspiring visions come to thousands of low-nestling, gentle, serene, strong, infinitely submissive, and infinitely serviceable souls, of whom no historian writes, and no poet sings, rendering them unconquerable by sorrow and disaster and death, enduringly patient and heroically pure, and, if forgotten of men, for ever dear to the heart of the Eternal Father. Too much we forget this. Even so searching an observer as Ruskin, in a recent *Fors Clavigera*, confesses his mistake in this respect. "Looking back," he says, "upon my efforts for the last twenty years, I believe that their failure has been in very great part owing to my compromise with the infidelity of the outer world, and my endeavour to base my pleading upon motives of ordinary prudence and kindness, instead of on the primary duty of loving God—foundation other than which no man can lay. I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility; nor was I the least aware how many entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom, until, chiefly in consequence of the great illnesses which, for some time after 1878, forbade my accustomed literary labour, I was brought into closer personal relations with the friends in America, Scotland, Ireland, and Italy, to whom, if I am spared to write any record of my life, it will be seen that I owe the best hopes and highest thoughts which have supported and guided the force of my matured mind. These have shown me, with lovely initiation, in how many secret places the prayer was made which I foolishly listened for at the

corners of the streets, and on how many hills which I had thought left desolate the hosts of heaven still moved in chariots of fire."

So, in that year 446 B.C., the most hallowing conception of Jehovah, and the sincerest enthusiasms for righteousness and service were not in the hearts of the lordly Persian courtiers, or with the men of Pagan pomp and splendour under the dominion of Artaxerxes, but in the spirit of the sad and suffering Jew, Nehemiah, who sorrowed over the sins of his fellow-countrymen, sighed for their restoration to obedience, order, and well-being, and accepted the onerous office of "governor" that he might preach to the people the reviving and renewing joy of God. Thus he is lifted, for the moment, to the highest grade of teachers, and placed by the side of the Christ of the New Testament, when He says, "These words have I spoken unto you that My joy may be with you, and that your joy may be full." He has fellowship with Paul, when he rejoices that he is counted worthy to preach "the glorious Gospel of the happy God." He anticipates Christianity in its most vital and essential element; links together in a natural sequence the two economies; shows that God is a Being, not coldly impassive, stolidly majestic, immovable, and without sympathy; but tender-hearted, pitiful, kind, forgiving, delighting in mercy and plenteous in redemption; a God Whose joy is strength for troubled men.

Politics, I may say then in a parenthesis, are not corrupt of necessity. Slime need not be the investing element of all legislation. A politician may be as unselfish as a prophet, and as receptive of the fresh inspirations of God

as a seer. The "Tirshatha" Nehemiah may preach a fuller and brighter gospel than Ezekiel or Samuel.

Oh! let the lowliest of us open our minds to God's Spirit! He has wonderful things to say to us if we will open our ears! He will surprise us with His revelations of truth if we are only simple enough to trust Him, sincere enough to follow Him, and humble enough to wait on Him. With a Christ-like docility in us, how often the prayer of the Pattern-Learner would be on our lips, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in Thy sight."

III. To me it appears like a stroke of true genius, as men call it—a breath of inspiration from God, as I would name it—that Nehemiah delivers this higher and richer message concerning God at the moment when the people are profoundly stirred by the recently re-discovered message of the ancient Law, and overwhelmed with dejection and sorrow for their newly-revealed sins.

At once, and whilst their interest in the older revelation is fresh and keen, its words ringing in their ears, and its sword piercing their hearts, he lifts their thought to the God of joy and blessedness. They are not to rest in a book, however hallowed, or in its communications, however painful and agonizing; but in the God of the book. The law is not a goal, but a light and a goad; a light on the way to God, and a goad to petition for His pardon. The disclosure of sin and penalty is intended, like the flames out of the mountain, to hurry the approach of the pilgrim

to the wicket-gate of repentance. The method is as Divine as the message; and the preacher perfects his work as he bids the people set to their tasks in the cheering sunshine of the motto, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Even more necessary was it to prevent the afflicted and penitent worshippers from resting in their sorrow, than resting in that which had occasioned it. They were in the deepest dejection, despairing of their country, of themselves, and of their God, and, therefore, neglecting both their privileges and their duties. Sadness covered them as a wet and depressing fog. Hope maintained with extreme difficulty a lingering life. Faith was almost overcome by grief. The cup of joy had been so frequently dashed out of their hand by foreign violence when they were about to drink it, that they feared to touch it again. Bewildering alarm seized them as they thought of the fearful openness of their lives to intruding foes, molesting neighbours, and invading calamity. Nothing was sure but misfortune. Nothing was stable but trouble. The foundations were destroyed. Even though they were back in the land of their fathers, and listening to the law of the Lord and sharing in the feasts of Zion, they had no abiding city, no *guarantees* of security. Their joy was like a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away; "fragile as a dew-drop on its perilous way from a tree's summit." To this mingled despair, dejection, repentance, sorrow, and unbelief, the true reformer speaks of God as their deliverance, and of His exhaustless and unbroken joy as their "stronghold."* Be of good cheer;

* Such is the marginal rendering.

His joy is the security for yours. You and yours are safe in Him. He is your defence, your strong tower. Shut in with God you are protected against all intrusion. In His pavilion you are hidden from the strife of the enemy. Therefore, "go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet," as though no foe existed and danger were impossible; "send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared" as having yourselves no possible lack of provisions, "For this day is holy unto our Lord;" "neither be ye grieved," as though He did not delight to forgive, and were not ready to bless, "For the joy of the Lord is your stronghold."

IV. "God's joy a stronghold?" Assuredly and unspeakably.

The immense strength infused into a soul to whom GOD is an ever-present, ever-bright consciousness of infinite joy, a deep and unbroken delight, suffusing all nature and all life with His own glad and redeeming purpose, exulting in His final victory over all evil, knowing all and seeing all from beginning to end, and along every inch of man's devious and sorrowful way, loving all and seeking to be the Saviour of all, sending His Son for all, and His Spirit to all, accepting as a gladdening sacrifice the lowly deeds of self-abnegating service of His feeble children—this, oh! who can tell it? It is unspeakable, and full of glory. The joy it begets only those who feel its thrill can know, and even they cannot tell in what immeasurable degrees that joy passes into defensive, protective, and inspiring strength. Such a consciousness of the presence of the joyful God flings around us an all-protecting shield from the swiftly-shot shafts of doubt and care, and far-travelling

apprehension ; builds about us a defensive tower from obtrusive fears ; delivers us from the *world* with its ceaseless din, low ideals, selfish greed, and diabolical perversions ; from the *flesh* with its blinding passion, base motive, and thwarting caprice ; and from the *Devil* with his softly-whispered insinuations of the necessity of evil, the selfishness of the good, and the folly of righteousness.

(*a*) When once there is breathed into us, so as to fill and uplift us above the low zones of our world-life, this sense of the Eternal Father delighting in the sons of men, and in the mercy He gives them ; ruling the world for them and their redemption ; redeeming them by *His own* propitiation ; and renewing them by the gift of *His own* Spirit, and enriching them by *His own* providence, *His own* prophets, and *His own* Bible ; forthwith this *world of Nature* is a new creation, instinct with a new significance, and potent with an evangelical energy. The sun goes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber to meet his exulting bride, and rejoiceth in his march as a man of overflowing strength to run a race. The harvests of golden grain rattle as with a merry laugh in the autumnal breeze. The brooks babble amongst the stones, and the rivers skip along the sides of the hills. The meadows smile in their quiet beauty, and the birds carol their music as they sit in the branches of the trees ; the earth swarms with beauty and loveliness, and "the meanest flower that blows gives thoughts that lie too deep for tears." The dread, fierce forces of the world are not blind and brutal, though they are resistless ; nor demoniacal, though they are destructive : but they are our healers and helpers

and educators, because they are a part of that great *spiritual* order of which our Joyous Father is Lord, and are embraced within the scope of His redeeming agencies. The prophet-poet Coleridge sings truth as well as beauty when he says—

"With other ministrations, thou, O ! Nature,
Healest thy wandering and distempered child ;
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets ;
Thy melodies of woods and winds and waters,
Till he relent, and can no more endure
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy."

We know we are under *law*. We accept the teachings of science as the teachings of our Father God, and rejoice in its demonstrations of the Abiding Order and Fixed Law of this world because we know the Law-Giver Himself is not a stern Draco, imaged only in the desolating earthquake, fire-belching volcano, and fierce tornado ; but a Father, yea, our Father and Redeemer, and that we belong to HIM, and not to the *house* in which He has put us ; the house, indeed, belonging to us by His gracious delegation and will, and built and ordered for us by His loving skill, and all because we ourselves belong to Him. A Divine geniality shines in the face of the world around us, and even if it be clouded we still sing—

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas,"
"For the joy of God is our stronghold."

(*b*) Nor is it less true of the bitter and painful experiences that make so large and obtrusive a portion of our earthly life ; for they, too, are a part of the Divine order and plan of a loving and rejoicing Father, Who finds His own joy diminished by our needless pain, is afflicted in all our afflictions, has no pleasure in our chastisement, and is seeking by all means to make us partakers of His holiness, so that we may be sharers of His happiness.

I do not close my eyes to the sufferings of this life. I cannot. I see too much of them. I know what sorrow means in most of its forms. I have seen a frail and sensitive and delicate frame shot through and through with electric shocks of pain, till patience has seemed outworn and defiance a duty. I know what fierce struggle, what worry, what agony of contrivance, what fret of pain some experience "to make both ends meet;" the weary and dull toil at uncongenial tasks from the week's dawn to its welcome close—not even Sunday being free from an intrusive anxiety ! I have seen riches take to themselves wings and fly away, leaving behind the awful misery that comes of broken hopes, shattered plans, and conscious wrongs ; and, worst of all, the gnawing irritation and irremovable bruise caused by the sense that it is "too late" to begin again. And have I not seen and felt the loss of children, and lived through the massive grief born of dwelling with the speechless dead, and the silent beloved ?

Ah ! me. Only yesterday a poor fellow said to me, after thrusts and stabs of bewildering pain that almost made him reel, "*Still, we know it's all right, don't we? We know whom we have believed, and are persuaded we are not going to lose anything we have given over to Him!*" Good,

dear souls ; they tell me how grateful they are to *me* for a fleeting visit, and a word of brotherly sympathy ! But the *debt* is mine, a thousand times mine ! They teach me ! They show how the consciousness of God changes the very face of sorrow ; that "grief is a joy misunderstood ;" that the burdens of life are its benedictions ; that the old Gospel is still new, and that though in the world men have tribulation, in Christ they have peace.

These undeniable facts interpret to me the rapturous experiences of persecuted and afflicted men that in my earlier years I was tempted to think over-weighted and unreal. The devout Samuel Rutherford, in his Aberdeen prison, bursts into the following rejoicing language—"They have sent me to this prison to feast with my king. The bridegroom hath run away with my heart ; I am drowned over head and ears in His love. We children of the bride-chamber have cause to leap for joy, for we have gotten the bridegroom's love-ring, and the marriage supper is drawing nigh. O ! time, run fast ! O ! sun, hasten on the banquet ! I wonder what the marriage supper of the Lamb will be in God's dining-palace of glory, since a kiss of Christ in this poor wilderness is so comforting !"

Payson, who suffered much and long, exclaims—"God's promises appear so strong, so solid, so substantial ; more so than the rocks and everlasting hills ; and His perfections, what shall I say of them ? When I think of one I wish to dwell on it for ever, but another and another equally glorious claims a share of admiration, and when I begin to praise I wish never to cease, but to find it the commencement of that song which will never end."

The seraphic Pearce said—"Were the universe destroyed,

and I the only being in it besides God, He is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded by venomous serpents and devouring beasts and savage men, in such a frame I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted joy."

Ellen Watson, the distinguished mathematician, positivist, and Christian, writes, on the night before her decease, her "Credo of Sorrow," and in it are these words—

> "I believe that all things work together for good to them that love God.
>
> I believe that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.
>
> I believe that our tribulation worketh in us an exceeding weight of glory if we look, not at what is seen, but at what is unseen; for the things we see are earthly, but the things we see not are heavenly." *

Similar testimonies I have read in the lives of Doddridge, Bunsen, Erskine, Monod, Robertson, Maurice, Chalmers, F. R. Havergal, Mrs. Prentiss, and others, all coincident in force and sense with the witnesses I have heard from actual men and women; and all revealing a holy fearlessness in facing the difficulties of life, a deep content with God, and an unquivering assurance that in His terrible avulsion from evil He is still patient, and in His patience He is just and good; that they themselves were not hurt, though they were in pain, nor damaged, though they suffered loss; but that He is always mindful of His own, and that they are dearer to the redeeming God than they are to themselves; and, therefore, His work in them, and for them, cannot come to nought.

Years ago, I went into the operating room of University

* *Life of Ellen Watson*, p 236.

College Hospital, and once saw one of the most skilled of our surgeons removing a limb. It was my first sight of the movement of the surgeon's knife. I could not keep back a shudder. It made me ill to note the writhing of the sufferer as the cruel instrument penetrated the quivering flesh. I looked at the surgeon's face. Not a muscle betokened anxiety. His gaze was steady, his spirit calm. His larger vision of the issues, the beneficent issues of his work, filled him with strength, steadied his nerve, and delivered him from weakening fear. The sight of his countenance made me strong. I could look to the end in calm self-control. So have I often found an unspeakable consolation in the joy of God. If He, the Lord of this pain-filled, care laden, sin-fettered life, where misery and shame and sin abound, and the struggle is so keen, and the strife so dinning; if He is glad and blessed amid all this, it is because He sees all and knows all, and I, therefore, may take heart, and be assured that the pains of creation prophecy a freer and fuller life, and the sufferings of the present will work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

(*c*) Sometimes I am tempted to think that the prospect of "dying" becomes more painful every year. Life is so much more worth living as the world gets older, and more stored with God's works, that the thought of separation from our cherished tasks, our chosen ideals, our beloved friends and our dear kindred, gathers in oppressiveness and gloom. If we are in bondage to the fear of death at all in our life-time, surely the bondage is more irksome and chafing as the materials that enrich life become more

ample, and the interests of living enlarge. But "the joy of God is a stronghold" into which we may run and be safe from the fear of death! How could the God and Father of our spirits be glad if, after having saved us, and trained and educated us for years, He were going to lose us for ever? Surely His loving heart would greatly miss us, and His joy would perish in the universal wreck. But doubtless death is His minister and messenger, and shares also in the great redemptive work in which He is engaged, setting us free from the limitations and restrictions of the flesh, and affording our being ample room and verge enough for growth in the sanctuary of God. So the pervading apprehension of the deep, central, and abiding happiness of God invests death itself with a new mission, forces it to take its place amongst the servants of the Father and the friends of His children. "Absent from the body we are *at home* with the Lord;" and share, as we never can here, that Presence where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore.

Children of the Father, let us run into this stronghold and be safe. Our God is the joyous God. Hidden away in fellowship with Him we are protected from invading circumstance, intruding sorrow, and conquering death, and partake of His eternal blessedness and unbroken peace. Even if men betray our trust, misjudge our motives, break down our up-building work, appropriate our victories, labelling them with their own name, slander our character, and frustrate our purpose; yet we may rest serenely in God, as a sick child on the bosom of its mother, for He will not leave or forsake us, and His joy will overflow as a feast into our receptive and trustful souls.

V. But this is not all. The joy of God is the source of our active, self-forgetting generosity. "Go your way," says Nehemiah, "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and *send portions for whom nothing is prepared*, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Whatever God is, He is for us. He is glorious in *holiness*, and He gave His Son, Who knew no sin, to be a sin-offering for us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He is *strong*, and He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. He is *love*, and having loved His own which are in the world, He loves them unto the end. He is *mercy*, and He delights in showing it to the broken in heart, to the sinful and desponding. He is *light*, and all who walk in the *light* see that the one blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth them from all sin; and so He is *joy*, and, therefore, He gives us of His fulness of beatitude and joy upon joy.

But whatever God is for us and to us, it is that we may be the same for and to others. The exhaustless fountain of the Divine gladness fills our cisterns till they overflow for the refreshing of a thirsty world. Joy in the Lord is strength, positive actual power for ministry. It creates around us the most favourable atmosphere for evoking our resources; raises our entire nature to the highest pitch of energy and gives unwonted elasticity and capacity of tension to all our faculties. When the heart is brimming over with gladness, labour is acceptable, opposition helpful, duty a delight, and responsibility a privilege. Joy enables a man to make the best and the most of himself in every one of his manifold tions. real

Loftier degrees of power are brought into play, vision is cleansed, and a healthy excitement diffuses itself throughout his nature. Weakening cares are lifted from the heart, and the whole man moves with little or no friction, and with all the suppleness and flexibility circumstances demand. As bodies expand under heat, so the soul enlarges under the genial influence of joy. Indeed men never reach their best before they have mastered the whole gamut of joy, from the lowest note of cheerfulness to the highest of rapture. Till then there will be voiceless forces within them. Godliness *with contentment* is *great* gain—not without it. As some men do business without obtaining a fiftieth part of the profit gained by others, so some Christians never "nett" the "*great* gains" that flow from from a joyful piety.

Vast is the difference between working for God from a sense of responsibility, strong, clear, and oppressive, and from a delight in work that grows out of fellowship with Christ, and exults even in sufferings for His sake. Jeremiah feels God's word within him as a burning fire shut up within his bones, and is driven to his unwelcome tasks with tearful eye and breaking heart, unable to hold his peace and yet wretched to the last degree in delivering the message of the Lord. Paul is sorrowing yet always rejoicing, poor as one who lives from hand to mouth, and yet making many rich in imperishable wealth; without anything in his scrip, and yet holding a title to, and actually enjoying the profit of, all things. Responsibility has but one song, gloomy and funereal, mostly pitched in the same key, and ending with the same melancholy refrain, "I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot stay." Joy has many

hymns of praise, and can sing even of "necessity" and delight in obligation; but generally these more serious claimants vanish to an immeasurable distance under the gladdening recollection that to one, who is less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Responsibility is a goad. Joy is a magnet. One pricks and urges forward by a sense of painfulness that reduces all work to the severe limits of obedience to imperative and resistless orders. The other is *life;* and such is its magic it converts even hard toil into play, and makes it as welcome as song to the merry birds, or sport to romping children. Overwhelmed and well-nigh crushed with the burden of the Lord, the afflicted prophet groans under his insupportable weight, and is lugubrious, denunciatory, despondent, and clothed with melancholy as with a garment. Strengthened with joy in God, and partaking of His infinitely happy nature, the glad apostle is affectionate, persuasive, and radiant with cheerfulness as the world with beauty on a spring morning. The Christian who would do his work under the most favourable conditions for strength and effectiveness, must never forget the exhortation which speaketh on this wise, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice."

Let us then revise our conception of God, and we shall, perforce, revise our theory of man's life and renew our power for work. Our theology shapes our anthropology. Despair of God means despair of man. Hope in God leads to hope in our destiny. Man is seen to be born to joy as the sparks fly upward. Trouble is not the goal of life, but a roughness in life's road; not the end of existence, but a phase of our

experience. The joy of God is strength for the suppression of all life's evils, the solace of all sad hearts, and the service of all for whom nothing is prepared.

VI. But is this revelation accessible to our intelligence and trust in these days? Can we in times when the preachers and poets of despair abound, show that the glad news of the joyousness of the Eternal God is set in such secure fastnesses of fact, reason and experience as to attenuate almost to the vanishing point our difficulties in accepting and practising it?

(*a*) I am not unmindful of the assertion that the God of the Hebrews is usually thought of as a Being of preternatural severity, overwhelming men by His majesty, begetting profound and soul-filling awe by His greatness, dwelling in the thick darkness, making the clouds His chariot, and sweeping down on His foes like a cyclone. But I contend that this representation is one-sided and unfair to a religion which had more festivals than fasts, more psalms than prophecies, and more triumphs than despairs. By the side of its intolerance of sin there is a mercy that reacheth to the very heavens, and near to the righteousness that is like the great mountains there is a forgiveness that inspires hopeful petition, even out of the depths of suffering and misfortune. The God of the Hebrews is no mere object of worship seated coldly apart, and awaiting the homage of men; He is a radiant presence, inspiring the mandate, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

(*b*) Remember, too, that the joy of our friends is our

strength. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man that of his friend," provided only that friendly face be lit up with love, and his eyes sparkle with a genial sympathy. "Did not our hearts burn within us," said the travellers with the risen Christ to Emmaus, "as He talked with us by the way," recalling the load He had lifted from their minds, the glow of emotion He had kindled, and the inextinguishable hopes He had inspired. The bare sight of some men is an instant dismissal of despair. The arrival of another is as the report of a disaster. A light heart dissipates gloom as the sun lifts fog. The joy of *friends* is a flowing fountain of perennial strength.

(*c*) What an exhaustless fund of gladness is a free, healthy, simple, and natural child; and how unspeakably indebted many of us are to the irrepressible joy, and strange heaven-sent wisdom of children for the loss of our moroseness, acerbity, and misery. "Little folk," said David, and in this he has been followed by Wordsworth, and the glorious company of the poets, "Little folk are God's stronghold for troubled men." Their joy is tired man's refreshment, and their mirth the jaded man's strength. Baptized into their artless and frank life we forget the fierceness of temptation, the strains of business, and the severities of sorrow. The joy of *children* is our strength.

(*d*) Moreover, have we not been infected by the thrill of a song, strengthened by harmonious music, gladdened by robust oratory, and tranquillized by fellowship with the serenity of nature! It is a common experience, this contagion of joy—this conversion of joy into power! How, then, can we stumble on the threshold of Nehemiah's

gospel? It is foreshadowed in every happy home, illumined in every circle of selectest friendship, enforced by the wide ministry of human hearts, and ought, therefore, to pass into our minds at once and become a stimulating assurance that the Lord of all worlds and the God of our salvation is in His eternal joy the delight and strength of all who know Him.

Rejoice, then, in the God of joy, and minister to those for whom nothing is prepared. Pour out your gladness for other hearts. Restrain it, and you destroy it. Cage your lark, and it will not sing. Open the door, give it access to the wide heavens, and away it goes merrily chanting its music up to heaven's gate. Cut deep channels in your hearts, and bank up the waters of your gladness, so that they may not enrich other fields than your own, and they soon run dry; barrenness takes the place of fertility, and death the place of life. The more we are capable of large desire, noble striving, and sublime consecration, the more shall we see the infinite loveliness of God, enter into partnership with His full and overflowing joy, and receive of His conquering and world-saving power.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

"AN idea which is used as a weapon of controversy is on the way to lose its universality, and to be turned into a half-truth."

CAIRD.

"Disagreement is refreshing when two men lovingly desire to compare their views to find out truth. Controversy is wretched when it is an attempt to prove one another wrong. . . . It destroys the humble enquiry after truth; it throws all the energies into an attempt to prove ourselves right. In that despairing spirit no man gets at truth. The meek will He guide in judgment."

ROBERTSON.

"It is by the failure of some that others succeed, and through my very foolishness there shall come, perhaps, a better success to others, perhaps more than any cleverness or wisdom of mine could have wrought."

JAMES HINTON.

"Has God to do with everything, with the sole exception of our failings?"

LESSING.

APPENDIX.

Abraham Offering his son Isaac.

When I preached the Sermon concerning "Abraham's Mistake in the Offering of his son Isaac," I had no notion that an appendix would be necessary or wise; but the exposition then given has been so sincerely lamented in *The Christian;* appreciatively questioned, in one or two of its particulars, by *The Christian Commonwealth;* treated as "heterodox" and dangerous by *Word and Work;* and the occasion of so much interesting correspondence, that I have been led to a fresh examination of the subject and of the literature bearing thereon, in the hope that I might aid those who are seeking to know what it really is that the Bible tells us about it.

But first, I may be permitted to say that I came upon the exposition in question, on this wise. I wanted the severest

test of the truth of our New Year's motto-text, "As thy days so shall thy strength be," and the offering of Isaac by his father, seemed to present all the conditions of severity the most inexorable critic could possibly desire; therefore, I chose it. Not having given the story any special and independent examination, I was without any definite opinions concerning it, and should have been obliged to confess, if asked, my inability to pronounce any judgment upon it, though I was not innocent of a floating and insecure idea that Abraham was really commanded to slay his son. Approaching the text in the original, I recognised, in the direction of God to Abraham, a familiar Hebrew word of wide and manifold significance, and forthwith sought to determine its meaning in this particular place. Consulting the authorities to hand, in the shape of dictionaries, grammars, and commentaries, and patiently weighing the evidences, supplied in the context and in the Abrahamic times, I was led to the conclusions expressed in the discourse.

I need hardly say I was not a little surprised, when in the week following the issue of the sermon, I discovered that it was made the subject of extended criticism and the occasion of somewhat grave statements about me as a religious teacher. Of the charges I say nothing. The criticism I cordially welcome. Indeed, I hold that to expositors of the Bible, above all men, the most searching criticism is due, and no man who loves truth more than he loves himself will ever ask that his work as an interpreter of the Revelation of God should be protected from the fiercest lights that can be made to play upon it. The urgent demand is, not that we should agree in opinion,

but, that each man should himself be true to the Word of God as he sees it, and to all the light he sees, and eager, as Emerson finely says, "to rely on the truth for aid against himself."

In that spirit I have examined the facts afresh; studied, as far as opportunity permitted, the writings of different authors, allowed full weight to every objection, and every difficulty; and now I proceed to submit fresh materials and reasonings to the judgment of all who are interested in a true exposition of this supreme event in one of the most self-renouncing lives ever lived.

I. As to the initial objection taken to

THE TITLE

of the sermon I wish to say, that on second thoughts I cannot defend it. It is inadequate. It does not express, as a title should, the real subject of the discourse. It emphasises an incident of the sermon when it ought to describe its drift. The fitting designation; that characterising its definite object and burden; would be, "*Abraham's faith in the offering of Isaac*," or "*Strength in the day of Parental Self-sacrifice, and where we may get it.*" I fear the gratitude expressed to me for the relief and comfort the sermon gave when preached, fixed my attention too exclusively on what I have called the "mistake," and biased me in favour of the title adopted.

But though I regret the title on *literary* grounds, I am *at present* unable to admit the assumption which underlies the objection to it. I sympathise with the sentiment of "surprise" and of pain that the word "mistake" should be applied to anything in the Bible,

and I can and do rejoice in the deep and hallowed reverence for the unique and marvellous revelation out of which it springs. Still, I must ask whether the sentiment is Scriptural on the one hand or robust and healthy on the other? Ingersoll's error is not in the title he uses. It is in the mistakes he refers to, and the spirit which controls his treatment of them. Had the errors of Moses exposed by him been the slaying of the Egyptian in the white heat of patriotic passion, or the flash of irritated speech to a tantalising people, I imagine no one could have found any valid objection to his proceeding. The Biblical biographies are not written with a weak fastidiousness or a cowardly fear of stating the whole fact. The Hebrew heroes are painted full length, and we see the men and women of the Jewish world in their habit as they lived. Indeed, it is the distinguishing merit of the Divine Revelation, that its biographies—the lives that disclose the Divine Life, suffering and working for the redemption of the world—are given with charming naturalness and instructive fulness. They cast a spell over us by their essential humanness, and win our sympathies by the fearful failures and glaring defects they pourtray in the characters of men of dominant faith in God and strenuous struggle to do His will—men, who in the supreme aspiration of their lives, were "according to God's own heart." Therefore, weak men like ourselves, battling for the right, are never so much at home as in the biographies of the Bible.

Recent events are not without significance in reference to this question. With one consent, our literary critics have condemned Mr. Cross because, in his "Life of George Eliot," he has cancelled passages in her letters which

might have obscured the brilliance of her fame; and shrunk from a full and fair treatment of that unchristian, unheroic, and unwomanly episode, in which she lifts herself into the place from which another woman and sister had fallen, unchecked by the splendour of her own genius and the lofty doctrines of self-renunciation she held and preached. It is notorious that an opposite error marks the biographies of Bishop Wilberforce and Thomas Carlyle. No doubt the gold of the target is seldom hit; but so high an authority as Mrs. Oliphant may be cited for the fact that perfect success is in this, as in other respects, exhibited in our Scriptures. She shows that there no fault is extenuated, nor aught set down in malice; but a plain, round, unvarnished tale is told of the whole course of men's lives, constituting the Hebrew biographies the faultless patterns of literary life-protraiture, as well as the sources of exhaustless warning and inspiration., It is not necessary to say, how largely the "mistakes" of the good and holy saints of the Hebrew Church enter into this perfection and efficiency of the Scriptures. We all know that the Bible would be robbed of much of its incomparable power if we cancelled its exposure of the sensuality of Adam, the mad murderous frenzy of Cain, the drunkenness of Noah, the falseness of Abraham, the covetousness of Jacob, the heedless folly of Jephthah, the coarse animalism of Samson, the ghastly sin of David, and a hundred similar facts, all "written for our admonition," and repeating with ever-increasing urgency the caution, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."*

*1 Cor. x. 1-13.

But *Abraham's* mistake! It is this "takes the breath away"; is "too startling"; and for which we "were scarcely ready." We have been wont to look on Abraham as the finest of the Hebrew patriarchs; and at this act of parental self-sacrifice as the very climax of his grand career!

But no one claims sinlessness for Abraham. Every reader of the Bible is acquainted with his temptations and his fall, as well as with his trial and his victory; and anyone who reads what I have said will see that the exposition of "the offering of Isaac" there given does not diminish, but magnifies his faith, makes him not less but more heroic and all-daring in his confidence in God, and holds him aloft as one of the most conspicuous champions of a sublime abandonment to the will of the Eternal. This Scripture, therefore, becomes by this reading of it *more abundantly* "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

II. But it is objected that even "if Abraham made a Mistake it is better to leave it where it is in the Bible" and "say nothing about it." And as a matter of history this

POLICY OF SILENCE

has found favour with the majority of the Expositors of the Bible, to the sore dismay and grave hurt of many sincere souls. "Difficulties," it is said by thoughtful hearers and readers, "difficulties are ignored by our teachers as though they were not felt; questions are skipped as if examination were unwarranted; and indis-

putable "morals" are enforced on minds rent and torn with an unappeaseable yearning to see "the moral difficulties" of the Scriptures boldly faced, and dealt with in the light of a clear intelligence and a consecrating reverence.

Such a method is conspicuously alien from the spirit of Abraham. He, at least, was a man of independence and freedom, boldly flinging the oppressive yoke of custom off his shoulders, "fastening to truth with irresistible power," fearlessly breaking with his past, resolutely treading his newly chosen and untracked course, his mind dwelling in the future as in a home, and in God as his eternal joy. Did he not raise the question of the divine justice in his bold colloquy with God concerning Sodom; his assurance of the righteousness of His administration inspiring his appeal, quickening his sense of personal freedom, and giving wings to his prayer? At least, then, we do not honour the spirit of the father of the inquiring and of the faithful, when we close our eyes against any possible mistakes in his judgment or defects in his character.

Moreover, is not that "right of search" recognized and endorsed all through the Bible? Is there a message anywhere limiting the maxim of Paul concerning prophesying, "Prove *all* things; hold fast that which is good?" And does not the unspeakable fruitfulness of reverent and truth-loving handling of the Word of God in its difficult places pronounce the condemnation of the policy of speechlessness, and encourage the expectation of profit both from the enquiry itself, and also from its results?

Certain it is, says Prof. Bonney, that "by adopting an agnostic position" in reference to the great difficulties of

nature, "no progress ever has been made or ever will be made." If caught in a scientific "slough of despond," you will never get out by merely wallowing about aimlessly. Assume that there is a way out: try in turn each that seems most probable, and probably one will be found."* The rule is as true in the sciences of Theology and Biblical Interpretation as in that of petrology, of which Prof. Bonney was speaking. We pass by the way of inquiry to conviction. We move through "the everlasting no" to "the everlasting yea." Our knowledge of the meaning and worth of the Bible is augmented as is our knowledge of the worth of life, by facing its difficulties with an honest and sincere spirit, and obtaining satisfaction for the God-given intellect, as well as peace and joy for the God-given heart.

III. Unable, then, to adopt the easy, but unfruitful and ignominious "let-alone" method, can we accept the theory that explains the words, "Offer him for an offering," as being, not a real, but only

A Seeming Command?

Kurtz says:—"God *tempted* Abraham to see whether his faith was capable of producing the self-renunciation, the obedience, and the trust which were necessary for its perfecting, and in order to advance his faith to that stage. Hence Abraham must be ready for the Lord to sacrifice even that which is nearest and dearest to him, more dear even than his own life. It is true that God did not seek

* *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, Vol. 41, Part 2, p. 60.

the *slaying* of Isaac *in facto*, but only the implicit *surrender* of the lad, in *mind and heart*." *

Robertson, with even more plainness, writes:—"God seems to have required of Abraham what was *wrong*. He seems to have sanctioned human sacrifice. My reply is—God did not require it. You must take the history as a whole, the conclusion as well as the commencement. The sacrifice of Isaac was commanded at first, and forbidden at the end. Had it ended in Abraham's accomplishing the sacrifice, I know not what could have been said; it would have left on the page of Scripture a dark and painful blot. My reply to God's *seeming* to require human sacrifice is the conclusion of this chapter. God says, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad.' This is the final decree. Thus human sacrifices were *distinctly* forbidden. He *really* required the surrender of the father's will. He *seemed* to demand the sacrifice of life."

"But further still. God did not demand what was wrong. It did not *seem* wrong to Abraham. It is not enough defence to say God did not command wrong. Had God *seemed* to command wrong, the difficulty would be as great." †

A more recent expositor, Professor Stanley Leathes, says:—"The historian had no intention to represent Abraham as anything else than an ordinary man, and, therefore, liable to err, as all men are."

"The moral law is not an arbitrary invention of God. He does not make things to be wrong because He forbids them; but He forbids them because, and only because,

* Kurtz, *History of the Old Covenant*, Vol. I., p. 262.
† F. W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, pp. 55-56.

they are in the nature of things, which is according to His own nature, wrong. . . . We may assume, therefore, that for God to give any such command as this (involving a violation of the sixth Commandment) was an impossibility. He could not absolutely and ultimately command Abraham to slay his son. And is not this exactly what the sequel of the story tells us? 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.' If the first command was the voice of God, how could the other be so? Abraham might, indeed, have argued thus, but we do not find that he did. The very severity of his trial consisted in the apparent godlessness of the command. How could God command that which was unlawful? He might well have asked, and perhaps did ask. But if he asked any such question, that would have at once opened out a means of deliverance for his faith. The probability is, his own moral sense was not sufficiently educated to enable him to ask any such question, and therein consisted the trial of his faith."

"He only *seemed* to command it. . . . He was never required, as a matter of fact, to slay him."*

Assuming, then, for the moment, that the words in dispute actually meant, "Abraham, slay Isaac;" this theory makes it perfectly easy to explain his action. God says, "kill" (although by the terms of the explanation He does not *mean* it), and Abraham, in his sublime loyalty to duty, makes ready to obey. But God appears ere the fatal plunge is made, and prevents the carrying out of His own feigned command. Abraham makes no "mistake." His character is saved; *but at what cost?*

* *Studies in Genesis*, p. 3.

In all reverence, I ask, is it like the God of the Bible to *feign* commands, or to *seem* to give a command one day and take it back three days afterwards? Does He, the Lord of eternal order, the Source and Fountain of Law, promulgate figments to His creatures? Is the world of morals less real and stable than the world of matter? Is there unreality with Him? Verily, if there be no way of deliverance except at such a price as this, we must elect to remain in bondage.

IV. But a "short and easy method," long in vogue and widely accepted, is offered us as a way of escape in the dogma that the

WILL OF GOD IS THE BASIS OF ALL MORALITY.

Augustine, according to the witness of Canon Mozley, expressly acknowledges the moral right of the Deity, not only to permit, but also to command actions of *imperfect morality*, when the moral standard of the age does not rise above that level. It is a necessary ACCOMMODATION of the Divine policy and of the Divine commands to the circumstances and moral standard of the day. Augustine says, "God suits His commands to the recipients of them," meaning, apparently, not only as to their *form*, but also as to their spirit and character.

Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, says, "It cannot justly be urged that the command was in itself immoral, or that it was a virtual sanction of human sacrifice. As to the objection that it was immoral, it may be said that the true basis of all morality is obedience to the will of God."*

* *Speaker's Commentary.* Gen. xxii. 3.

To what appalling lengths that doctrine may be carried we see in the words of Dr. J. G. Murphy, who says, "It is evident that an absolute Creator has by right entire control over His creatures. He is, no doubt, bound by *His eternal rectitude to do no wrong to His moral creatures;* but the creature, in the present case, has forfeited the right that was given, by sin. Without the divine command, it is needless to say, that it was not lawful for Abraham to slay his son."*

For a fairer and milder statement of the same theory, we may cite the words of Dr. Dykes. "It is conceivable that a painful misgiving may have insinuated itself into the mind of this dissenter from prevailing religions, whether he had the heart to sacrifice as much for the blessed Jehovah, Who was become his Friend, as the idolaters around were doing to propitiate their unfriendly divinities; whether, indeed, he were not loving his Isaac too well to be willing to yield him up even to the God Who gave him. Any such misgiving, could we suppose it to find room in the patriarch's mind, would form a natural point of attachment for the testing summons addressed to him by the Almighty. But it is not necessary to risk even this conjecture. The stage of religious teaching at which mankind then stood, and the religious atmosphere in which men moved, makes it, I think, intelligible how Abraham could accept such a voice from heaven in the simplicity of a faith which did not stumble, where the saints of any later time would have stumbled.

"At this point, however, the further question arises, how the all-merciful Father could consistently issue such a

Cf. Genesis, p. 384.

command, or appear, even for a moment, to reduce His own worship to a level with the inhuman rites of Baal. The only answer to be given to this question is one which will best satisfy those who have accustomed their minds to the historical method of Divine procedure in the training of our race. Education is impossible unless the instructor will stoop to adapt himself to the stage at which the learner stands. To this rule the wisdom of God has conformed itself throughout all the stages of revelation. It is this principle alone which renders intelligible the 'accommodations' and anthropomorphisms recorded in the early records of Scripture." *

For the ablest exposition and defence of this "accommodation theory," we must go to the writings of Canon Mozley. He holds that the right of man to live ceases as soon as evidence is supplied of a Divine command to deprive him of life ; but he adds, that it is of immense importance to be sure that God would ever command such an act, and that He has actually done it ; for nothing short of a *miracle* is evidence of a command to kill an innocent son. The probabilities are a billion to one against such a mandate ; but in this case the "Great Patriarch was the natural subject of a Divine command to sacrifice his son, because, in consequence of the ideas then prevailing, nothing interposed between his own convictions and the authority of the miracle." So "the command was accommodated to an earlier state of ideas regarding the human being and his rights." †

The extreme plausibility of this defence is readily

* *Abraham, the Friend of God*, pp. 246-251.
† *Ruling Ideas in Ancient Times*, p. 50.

admitted, and its apparent conformity with historical fact recognized. It accords with the great doctrine of Lessing concerning the education of the human race. It also, like the former theory, saves Abraham. He makes no "mistake." An actual command, though of "imperfect morality," authorizes his strange deed. True, the deed is essentially heathenish; and this very Abraham has signalized himself by his bold and steadfast detachment from the cruelties and follies of his Pagan ancestry, and his victorious ascent into the highest moral realm of his day; but his *conscience* is not offended; even he is ready to slay his son.

Moreover, the theory *seems* to protect the action and character of God—the one *vital* element in the whole controversy. But does it? What are the guarantees of the Divinity of a morality that moves up and down with the different standards of different ages, different societies, and different lands, *in so capital a matter as the taking of human life?* Tell us that such differences mark the different stages of human culture and civilization, and we can verify the statement by reference to Dahomey and India, and even to the India of half-a-century ago and the India of to-day; but claim them as the direct offspring of God and we instantly question the paternity. God is one, and His moral law is one, and endures from generation to generation.

But the most fatal flaw in this accommodation theory is its *doctrine of the ground and source of right.* According to it, "the moral law is an arbitrary invention of God," created and fixed by His mere will and power, and not an essential and inextinguishable part of the eternal nature of

things; a dogma as unscriptural as it is unphilosophical. The Bible declares that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and bids us "be holy, because He is holy," and treats the difference between right and wrong as everlasting. God's will does not make right. It *is;* and He wills it because it is, and His will reveals it. Were there no God, right would not be annihilated. "He does not," says Professor Leathes, "make things to be wrong because He forbids them; but He forbids them because, and only because, they are in the nature of things, which is according to His own nature, wrong."

But I must not prolong this part of my essay. Let me, therefore, sum up this section by saying, that to admit that the words "offer him for an offering" do not NECESSARILY mean, destroy him in a burnt sacrifice, and then to affirm that God commanded Abraham *to slay his innocent son*, is—

(1) To declare that *will as will* makes right and wrong, a doctrine not only notoriously false, but if carried to its final issues, one that undermines all ethic, teaches that "might is right," and clothes Satan himself with right-and-wrong-creating power.*

(2) To represent God as shaping His edicts to a great and trustful soul like Abraham's, by the most depraved and pagan custom of a barbarous time.

(3) To describe the Law-giver as going directly in the face of the *natural law* against murder, and violating one of "the ten words" given, indeed, at a later date, but

* *Cf. Fetich in Theology*, by John Miller, pp. 20, 42, 100, &c., for a defence of the doctrine that "the ground of moral obligation is the excellence of holiness."

manifestly expressive of a fundamental fact in the relations of men.

(4) To say that God Himself counselled the infringement of His own express injunction against the offering of human sacrifices ; * an injunction admittedly promulgated at a later period of Israel's history, but assuredly revealing the purpose and mind of the Eternal ; and, finally, it is—

(5) To impeach the great Biblical Idea that the "sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite *heart*" ; spiritual, and not external ; of the inward self, and not of somebody else.

Whoever, therefore, dare say that God expressly, and in terms, bade Abraham *slay* his son Isaac ! I, for one, dare not and cannot.

V. What, then, is to be done ? Is there nothing left us but the mournful conclusion, that after all, this greatest of the patriarchs did misapprehend the Divine voice, and misread the Divine message ? Yes ; we may even yet save Abraham, and retain the exalted moral teaching of this incident in his history.

For a long time past, scholars have detected in this chapter (as in other parts of Genesis), *two* names for God, and from that fact and other data, they have suggested that the compiler of the Pentateuch probably had two, three, or more different documents before him. This position is now accepted by the most conservative and "orthodox" students of Holy Scripture ; and its application to this passage of the Abrahamic biography has

* Leviticus xviii. 21 ; xx. 1-5 ; Deuteronomy xii. 31 ; xviii. 10.

originated the idea that the story of the offering of Isaac represents a victorious conflict in the mind of the patriarch on the right of the prevalent human sacrifices ; that we have

Two Voices

speaking within his soul, the first, the voice of *custom*, and the second, the voice of God ; but both of which, in accord with the Hebrew view of life and of all things, are attributed to God. Dr. Dykes, it will have been seen from the quotation above given, does not look with entire disfavour upon this view. Dean Stanley seems to have held it.* Professor Drummond's theory of the "Evolution

* "There have been in almost all ancient forms of religion, in most modern forms also, two strong tendencies, each in itself springing from the best and purest feelings of humanity, yet each, if carried into the extremes, suggested by passion or by logic, incompatible with the other, and with its own highest purpose. One is the craving to please, or to propitiate, or to communicate with the powers above us by surrendering some object near and dear to ourselves. This is the source of all sacrifice. The other is the profound moral instinct that the Creator of the world cannot be pleased or approached by any other means than a pure life and good deeds. On the exaggeration, on the contact, on the collision of these two tendencies, have turned some of the chief corruptions, and some of the chief difficulties, of Ecclesiastical history. . . . The sacrifice, the resignation of the will in the Father and the Son was accepted; the literal sacrifice of the act was repelled. On the one hand, the great principles were proclaimed that mercy is better than sacrifice, and that the sacrifice of self is the highest and holiest offering that God can receive. On the other hand, the inhuman superstitions, towards which the ancient ceremonial of sacrifice was perpetually tending, were condemned and cast out of the true worship of the Church for ever. There are, doubtless, many difficulties which may be raised on the Offering of Isaac; but there are few, if any, which will not vanish away before the simple pathos and lofty spirit of the narrative itself, provided that we take it, as in fairness it must be taken, as a whole; its close not parted from its commencement, nor its commencement from its close—the subordinate parts of the transaction not raised above its essential primary intention. And there is no difficulty which will not be amply compensated by reflecting on the near approach, and yet the complete repulse, of the danger which might have threatened the early Church."—Dean Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church*, Vol. I., p. 39.

of the Bible" looks in the same direction.* Goldziher,† and the writer of the article on Abraham in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* give expression to it. Dr. Ladd says, in so many words, "that we must regard in the light of a mental process the case of Abraham who was ready to slay Isaac under an impulse which he accepted in faithful love as coming from Jehovah." ‖

Now as to this explanation, it seems to me that the task of the interpreter is in no way lightened by the discovery that the story is built up by a teacher sent from God, with materials gathered from different quarries. The investigation of the building-up of the story is one thing; the interpretation of each part of it is another; and is rendered not less but more difficult by the necessity of giving full weight to every *fact established* by the patient study of the growth of the Divine Book. Admit, as even so conservative a defender of the Scriptures as Dr. Edersheim is prepared to do, that "the Pentateuch consists of several documents welded together by one or more redactors" § or editors; still we are not thereby released from finding out what the words of each part of the compacted whole signify, or impelled upon the conclusion that we have "two or more voices" giving audible expression to certain "mental processes" and no God.

If by "mental processes" and "two voices" God is to be eliminated from the account, then every student of the

* *Expositor*, Third Series, Vol. I.

† *Mythology of the Hebrews*, pp. 47-8.

‖ *The Doctrine of the Bible*, Vol. I. p. 472. Others have referred "the first voice" to Satan, and treated it as a temptation of the evil one.

§ *History and Prophecy in relation to the Messiah*, pp. 231-2.

Bible will declare that such a course is entirely anti-Hebraic, and anti-scriptural, and every thorough student of life will declare it to be as unphilosophical as it is un-Biblical. May not "mental processes" be a Revelation of God? Can we have a revelation from God to men and through men without a "mental process"; and if we accept the Bible as a revelation of the divine treatment of man, are we not driven back on the fact that, in some way or other, by authentic voice heard as we hear one another, or by suggestion, or "vision," or "dream," in some one of His "divers ways" of reaching and guiding men, *God* spake to our father Abraham and said of Isaac "Take him and offer him for an offering to Me."

It is as Ewald says, "a divine voice" * that speaks to this greatest hero of the faith, in the night, and we must still ask what it is the Voice really says.

VI. In responding to that enquiry, I will first add to the statement on pages 26 and 27 of this volume the judgment of two confessedly high authorities, of whose opinions I was entirely unaware until my attention was called to them by my tutor, the Rev. W. R. Stevenson, M.A.

Hengstenberg, whom I may mention as a "champion of orthodoxy," † is referred to by Kurtz, in his *History of the Old Testament Covenant*, as saying, "that a Divine command to offer a sacrifice had, indeed, been issued, but

* *History of Israel*," I., pp. 332-3.

† Not that I think highly of the office, for according to my reading of history, the world seems to have gained more from "the champions of heterodoxy," so-called, than from the champions of "orthodoxy." Religious *Reformers* and Revolutionists have rarely been of the latter class. The highest of teachers did not belong to the orthodox party.

that Abraham had misunderstood its import. The import of the temptation had lain in this, to determine in what sense God demanded the sacrifice of man" * (1 Sam. i. 25). The same view is advocated by *Lange*: "*Jehovah* commanded Abraham to *offer up* Isaac. The patriarch submitted, but in the decisive moment understood the commandment as if *Moloch* had enjoined him *to slay* Isaac. Then Jehovah interposed, praised the *obedience* of the patriarch, but corrected his *error*, and showed him the difference between death and surrender by calling on him to *slay* the ram, in token that he had given over and offered up his son. Both by the *vigour* with which Abraham complied with the command of God enjoining the sacrifice, and by the clearness with which he understood the voice of God explaining the sacrifice, the patriarch showed that he was the chosen one whom Jehovah would employ for founding a theocracy in which all human life should be offered up to Him, and yet no human life should be taken away in the exercise of pretended, but iniquitous priestly functions." †

So far, then, for authorities. Now let us consider the

OBJECTIONS

aised against this interpretation.

(1) There stands the allegation that a mistake *cannot* have been made, because the act itself is praised by God in the words, "Because thou hast obeyed My voice, in blessing I will bless thee." ‖

* Hengstenberg, quoted by Kurtz, *History of the Old Covenant*, Vol. I., p. 261.

† Lange, *Life of Jesus*, Vol. I. p. 120. Page 115 in the four-volume edition of T. & T. Clark.

‖ Genesis xxii 16-17.

But what are the facts? Is the act of slaughter itself commended? By no means. The act itself is *energetically and vehemently forbidden* in the express command, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." It is the *spirit* of obedience which Abraham's readiness to follow his convictions displayed that is extolled. "A closer attention to Scripture, and a godly jealousy of fanciful interpretations," would render it impossible to doubt that it is the willingness to make what Abraham judged to be the highest offering he can to God that receives the divine "Well done," and not a deed of human sacrifice.

(2) A similar objection is based upon the references to the offering of Isaac in the New Testament. It is urged that it is "remarkable that the New Testament should commend Abraham for what he did, and make no mention of his mistake." But do not James and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews eulogise the faith of Rahab the harlot with the same glowing zest as that of Abraham, and without the slightest hint of any "mistake?" and yet no one would cite that as evidence that *her* behaviour was above suspicion, and her departure from truth and chastity no mistake.

"In every work regard the author's end,
Since none can compass what they ne'er intend,"

is a wise rule in exposition. The object of the writers of the two letters is to illustrate *faith*. That faith is real, strong, and victorious in Abraham, the father of the faithful, and in Rahab the harlot. They take what they want from their lives and leave the rest. This is the habit of the New Testament writers.* James is proving

* *Cf.* Paul's treatment of the incident in Exodus xxxiv. 29-35; in 2 Cor. iii. 7-13.

that an inoperative faith is useless, and he cites Abraham as an example of one who vindicated his faith against the charge of being an empty and dead emotion by magnificent deeds. So to the author of the *Hebrews* Abraham appears as one of the most conspicuous heroes of a faith that *lives in the* future, since he seems to have grasped the doctrine of a Resurrection, and to have nourished his strength by the anticipation that, even if he did slay his son, God would somehow give him back again to him. Clearly the whole stress of the eulogy is on the *fact* of a conquering faith, and not on the *mode* in which it was ready to assert itself. As witnesses for or against this, or against any other interpretation, these passages are wholly out of court.* Space, if not time, would fail me to tell of the "mistakes" of Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, and David; but I may fairly say that until we can show that these individuals were animated by a faith that lifted them above all fault and saved them from all mistakes, the bare fact that they occur as examples of faith in the same roll-call of the heroes of God with Abraham will forbid us to cite the New Testament references to him against the exposition given of his mistake in connection with the offering of Isaac.

(3) I am asked, why should Abraham be told to go to "the land of Moriah" and to one of "the mountains" if

* The *Commonwealth* says on this:—"Neither *anaphero* as used by James, nor *prosphero* as used by Paul, requires any death in the case. . . . These words deal with what Abraham *did*, and not what he was commanded to do. He did not take the life of Isaac, and, therefore, it would have been improper to use a word in referring to the transaction which affirms that life was taken. . . . They throw no light upon what God commanded Abraham to do."—Feb. 12, 1885.

God only required a full surrender of his son to His will, and a perfect dedication of him to His service?

Without more than calling to mind the variety and suggestiveness of the word "Moriah"*; it is sufficient answer to this question to recall the identification of the fortunes and future of the Abrahamic family with Palestine, already made by God in the promises given to Abraham. No spot was so fit for perpetualizing in the seed of Abraham the gospel of separation from the peoples of the earth, as that on which God directed Abraham to offer to Him his son, for the furtherance of the great missionary vocation wherewith they were both called.

(4) This view, it is urged again, "renders the narrative feeble." The "trial is not emphatic," severe, and "*real*." Forsooth, because there is no murder there is no meaning. This is prodigiously materialistic! I have myself heard a mother say of a son who *would* devote himself to the life of a missionary, "I'd rather follow him to his grave!" The last thing some good fathers and mothers do is to suffer their children to live a free, personal, and independent life; and as for actually, and out and out giving son or daughter over to God, for His sole and absolute service, how few of us are sufficient for such things? Is it not a totally unspiritual and inadequate apprehension of the meaning of the dedication of souls to God, that requires a command to "slay Isaac" before it can see any direction to offer him to the service of Jehovah?

* Moriah signifies chosen or pointed out of God (Gesenius, Lange), shown of Jehovah, i.e., revelation or manifestation of Jehovah (Hengstenberg, Kurtz, Keil), God is my Instructor, alluding to the Temple from which the law should afterwards proceed (Kalisch), &c., &c.

So far as I know, no other objection exists; and since these are cleared out of the way, I proceed now to the evidence on which I rest my exposition.

The "Word."

As to the "Word" translated "offer." (1) Do not forget that it does not necessarily mean "to slay." In support of this I am glad to be able to quote the *Commonwealth*, which says of the word: "It occurs, in all of its forms, over 1,100 times; 164 times it is rendered 'come up'; 302 times 'go up'; 77 times 'offer up.' It is also used for 'burnt offering' and 'burnt sacrifices' 284 times. In the form in which it is found in the passage under consideration it is used 66 times in the sense of offering burnt offerings, or burnt sacrifices. We have mentioned, simply the more general uses of the word, and it will be seen by this induction that there is a very general use which does not necessarily imply the burning of the sacrifice, though there is nothing in this use which necessarily prohibits the burning."

Again, *Word and Work* says: "He is quite right in saying that the Hebrew word used does not, in its simple sense, convey with it of necessity the idea of putting to death." *

From that, then, it is obvious, we have to be guided by the context and other considerations as to the meaning in this particular direction.

(2) I hold that the *context* is conclusive against its having meant in this case—"slay;" for God Himself corrects any such meaning, and says distinctly, and with

* January 29th, 1885.

suggestive repetition, "Lay not thine hand on the lad," as if He would say, "I did not mean that. That is not what I want. I am not asking for 'a human sacrifice.' You have misjudged my purpose altogether. Still I accept, and rejoice in your readiness to do My will; and forasmuch as it was in thine heart to do even this for Me, in blessing I will bless thee, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice."

(3) Again, it is an acknowledged law in language that the meaning of a word is limited by the subject to which it refers. The word for eternity in Hebrew is applied to "God" and to "hills." The nature of the "hills" restricts the area of significance of the word "eternal" in one case as it cannot be restricted in the other. The "offering" in this command is of a *man;* a man made in the image of God, and of whom God had said in effect, if not in terms, "Thou shalt not kill him." If, then, as is universally admitted, the original words, "offer him for an offering" do not necessarily imply the burning of the sacrifice, will not this law be applicable, and the notion of killing and slaying be shut out altogether?

(4) But against this it is maintained that "it is used throughout the Old Testament as a distinctly sacrificial word, and is specially appropriated to the burnt offerings." But the Bible is not the product of one generation, but of many. The oldest parts may date back as far as Enoch; its newest were written at the close of the Christian era. It is a human book, and its words undergo changes of meaning precisely as our English words do. The record of the sacrifice of Isaac is separated from the directions in

Leviticus by an interval of at least four centuries, so that though the idea of slaying and burning the sacrifice was dominant in the ritual of worship, it does not follow that it was present at an earlier date.* It is not questioned that it signifies to slay in Jeremiah xix. 5 ; 2 Kings iii. 27; and Judges xi. 31 ; but I hold that such was not the fixed meaning in the days of Abraham. Even so cautious and careful a critic as Dr. Edersheim admits that it is established that sacrifices were *not* offered in connexion with the Tabernacle during the pilgrimage in the wilderness (*cf.* Amos v. 25). The Tabernacle is not the Tabernacle of *sacrifices*, but the Tabernacle of the *meeting* between God and Israel ; the place where God would meet with His people.† The ritualistic use of the word would not long precede the establishment of the ritual,‖ and, therefore, we may conclude that in the earlier and more fluid condition of the language, the meaning of the direction was simply, "Take your son, even your loved Isaac, and offer him to Me. Free him from your control. Let him be Mine now and evermore."

(5) This becomes more probable when we contrast the direction in this closing period of Abraham's life, with the incident of the ratification of the covenant by sacrifice,

* Only one passage exists which in any way militates against this conclusion—Genesis viii. 20, 21, and that is not sufficient to overthrow the whole evidence given above.

† *History and Prophecy in relation to the Messiah*, p. 236.

‖ Fuerst refers in a lengthy article in his *Hebrew Dictionary* to the phrase as a "*formula* of frequent occurrence." Surely the Levitical *formulæ* are not coeval with Abraham. The word bishop, used by us for a special officer, represents a word which at the outset was vaguely applied to anyone discharging the duties of an overseer. The restriction to specific acts of words that in earlier periods had a wide range of meaning, is a common feature in the history of language.

recorded as occurring at an earlier period of his history. See with what fulness of detail, and minuteness of specification the directions are supplied for the sacrifice of an heifer by burning. Linger over the particulars. "Take for me an heifer," a "she-goat," a "ram," a "turtle-dove," and a "young pigeon." The sacrificial animals are specially named; the age of three of them is fixed, and the sex of another. "And Abraham took him all these and divided them in the midst and laid each half over against the other; but the birds divided he not." And the sacrifice was not forbidden, but accepted, and the promise of protection and prosperity repeated. Would the directions have been less specific for the actual slaying of Isaac, a son of God, than they were for this offering of the animals of the field and birds of the air?

(6) Consider again, may not this surrender of Isaac to God have been necessary to free him from the despotism inherent in the parental rights of those days and to enable him to become a personal, free, and independent Will, and so qualified to discharge his share of the obligations of the Hebrew race? Was not this a part of the divine purpose in asking for his surrender? And was it not necessary if Isaac were to do his own work? The power of the father over his child was terrible. "Slay my two sons," (Gen. xlii. 37) says Reuben, as though forsooth they had no rights of their own, and might be given in pledge for the fidelity of their father. And in point of fact they had no personal rights.* It is no mere fancy then that sees in the direction of God the introduction of Isaac to the privileges and

* *Cf.* Müller, *History of Sanscrit Literature*, p. 408, in addition to the references on p. 37.

potencies of independent spiritual succession to his father Abraham as head of the Hebrew race and the chief propagandist of the Hebrew religion!

(7) Moreover, do not the gigantic difficulties in the way of accepting any other interpretation compel us to give the preference to this; even if we feel that every cloud is not lifted, and all made clear as day? No exposition is so solid and substantial a relief to faith. Many men cannot accept the notion that God commanded a murder! To them it is a moral impossibility, and they are sure there is mistake somewhere. It cannot be in Him. It *may* be in men. Others feel no less repugnance to the representation of God as feigning commands, or giving a command to-day which He contradicts to-morrow. And, whilst some may ask, "why did not God speak with unmistakeable precision and reveal the path of duty in words of fixed and unquestionable meaning?" even they will admit that the divine command often is to us, as it was to Abraham, a testing of our sincerity in the search for truth, of our eagerness to understand what God says rather than to yield to the first impulse, or catch the first idea that seizes us, or to find God agreeing with *ourselves*. Such an exegesis makes Abraham a man of our own day, and this incident in his life a fruitful story for all time.

(8) Yes, I claim for this interpretation the merit of superior fruitfulness. It has all the advantages of every other exposition, and none of their defects. The character of the illustrious patriarch ranks as high as ever in the annals of faith. His career places him distinctly in the fore-front of Religious Reformers. His immense strength of will, his courage, his sublime loyalty to God, become more,

and not less, impressive; when we see him go forth in obedience to what he judges the will of God to offer his son as he had done the heifer and the goat. That he had his misgivings, his doubts and fears, only makes him more thoroughly one with ourselves; that he battled with them, and by the help of God mastered them, makes his life one of the richest "aids to faith," and freshest fountains of comfort we have. Long, indeed, did he struggle with his difficulties. After the first promise of a son, he in despair substituted his steward, Eliezer, as his adopted one, but he was not long before he gave up that makeshift arrangement, and asked God for a *real* heir.* Then again he failed and Ishmael appears, but this will not suffice, and so "he wavered not through unbelief but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being assured that what He had promised He was able also to perform." † So when a *third* time his faith is sorely tried, and he adds to the trial by his misconception of God's will, he wavers not, but waxes strong in faith, and becomes the unforgetable inspiration in the battle with doubt, difficulty, and unbelief. It is something to hear so fine a protest against human sacrifices; ‖ but it is a gift of entirely unpurchaseable

* Genesis xv. 2, 3, 4, 6.

† Romans iv. 17, 22, illustrates and enforces this phase of Abraham's character with special energy and clearness, and traces the strenuous trust of the aged man, in the face of persisting doubts, and confronting facts, in the birth of Isaac. The language is very strong, and shows a sympathetic appreciation of the difficulties of Abraham's position.

‖ "The motive for the intended sacrifice of Iphigenia was perverse and barbarous; Agammenon had killed a stag sacred to Diana, and the incensed goddess would only be reconciled if the king's eldest and dearest daughter were offered to her. . . . . But the trial of Abraham evoked the doctrine—*that not even the most enthusiastic and the most devoted piety requires or justifies human sacrifices.*"—Kalisch on *Genesis* xxii. 3.

value to have the stimulating presence of such a victorious believer in God.

" Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

INDEX.

ABRAHAM, a hero for to-day, 22; character described, 23; most critical incident of his life, 24; the real meaning of the command to sacrifice Isaac, 26-7, 448; sources of his history, 440; forgets the older revelation, 29; in the New Testament, 445.

Affection, a basis of goodness, 134.

Age, old, has its perils, 210-11.

BIBLE, The, Difficulties of interpretation, 30; a present-day Book, 40; a Book of battles, 58; how to read it, 60, 308; speech of God to men, 375; its growth, 376; successive editions of, 378; reproductive, 380; fragments of, 384; educating Christ, 385; its hard places, 430.

Biblical theory of life tested, 22; Biblical biography, its perfection, 428.

Browning, R., quoted, 370.

Browning, Mrs., quoted, 180, 401.

Bulwer Lytton quoted, 117.

Burns, J. D., quoted, 138.

Burke quoted, 385.

Bushnell quoted, 360.

Butler quoted, 328.

CALMNESS in view of evil, 412.

Campbell, J. McCleod, quoted, 141.

Carlyle quoted, 12, 18, 38, 42, 52, 113.

Century, the Sixth, before Christ, 282.

Chaning's experience as a Tutor, 51.

Christ, in what respects greater than Moses, 90; love of, and social purity, 93; teaches con-

tinuity of inspiration, 144; of Genesis, 350; fulfilling prophecy, 368; still our hope, 370; educated by Old Testament, 385.

Conscience, its vitality, 46.

Cyrus, a polytheist, 253 (note).

David, his place in Hebrew history, 164; the real charm of his life, 166; training himself by song, 184; in prayer, 191; his hymns, 192; his song a part of revelation, 194; his great sin, 204.

Death, freed from fear of, 416.

Drummond, Prof. H., the errors of his book on "Natural Law" exposed, 272.

Elijah, his posthumous power, 224; many-sided character, 225; his reforming energy, 226; God's surgeon for evil, 228; sources of his courage, 230; his sense of a divine call, 232; God explains him, 238.

Eliot, G., quoted, 128, 162, 202, 214, 315, 333, 401.*

Emmanuel, 240.

Emerson quoted, 66, 109, 163, 381.

Erskine, T., quoted, 18, 324.*

Every-day life, God in it, 2.

Ewald quoted, 39, 66, 267, 284, 289' 307, 310, 346.

Exile, sevenfold blessing of, 252; a goad to righteousness, 253; developes the idea of Messiah, 254; developes the Missionary idea, 256; incarnate in Ezekiel, 264.

Ezekiel, his character and work, 266; not a fatalist, 269.

Fact, the basis of poetry, 289.

Faith, a victory, 53; in unbroken love of God, 316.

Fear of God, a subordinate but real aid, 66; the fruit of intelligent love, 68.

Fichte quoted, 304.*

Freedom of Christianity, 92.

General Gordon, 100, 112, 117.

God, His strength underlying our life, 5; man belongs to, 10; His treatment of our mistakes, 32-3; wrestles with Jacob, 48; His face, 54; in Purity, 70; Builder of all things, 77; makes the world's kings, 176; His mercy convicting of sin, 212; must be waited for, 248; making men, 168; lovable in Himself, 301; glorified in affliction, 304; Vindicator of the righteous, 312; better than our prayers, 323; grace of, 208, 324; renewing sight of, 336; infinite, 404; revealed to the lowly, 405; His will, *not* the basis of morality, 435.

Godet quoted, 256.

Goethe quoted, 162, 304,* 346.

Gospel, permanence of a divine, 281; of the exile, 241; of exile incarnate in Ezekiel, 262; of Nehemiah, 406.

HEREDITY, law of, 108; does not lessen responsibility, 274; the divine side of, 276.

Hope, exulting, 96; the Hebrew exiles', 251.

Huss, at the stake, 32.

IDEAS, the final founts of force, 105, 290.

Incarnation, the, 7.

Inspiration, what is it? 141.

Integrity, blended with Penitence, 332.

Israel, a spiritual community, 89.

JACOB, "his conversion," 43; the meaning of the "wrestling," 49; his former life agony to him, 47.

Jews, in the time of Christ, 358; confess Christ Saviour of Gentiles, 362; our attitude to the, 364; Christ-ward movements among them to-day, 360.

Job, the ideal sufferer, 285; the story of—is it fact? 287; his story, the pivot of, 204; third trial, 300; his sublimest victory, 305; supporting convictions, 308; real meaning of his words, 310; sight of God after death, 314; origin of convictions, 318; his conscience "void of offence," 326; confessing his sins, 328; lessons from, 344.

Joseph, the source of his strength, 62.

Joy of God, 406; a defence from forces of nature, 410; solace in sorrow, 412; power for work, 417.

KINGDOM, the key-word of the Bible, 80.

Kingsley, C., quoted, 238, 372.

Life, an education, 12; a unity, 16; on what the value of any conception of it depends, 19; a portion of the divine life, 21; its noblest prayer, 36; and religion, one, 40.

Lightfoot quoted, 67.

Longfellow quoted, 219.

Love and Obedience, 160.

Love-making, Eastern, 126.

MACDONALD, G., quoted, 117, 159.

Man, building, 166; how God makes men, 168; how men inspire men, 172.

Marriage, 127.

Material Prosperity, none without God, 4-6.

Messiah, idea, 347; growth of, 352; food of faith, 356; fuel of hope, 357; a missionary force, 360.

Milton quoted, 98, 116.

Mozley quoted, 37.

NAOMI and Ruth in the present day, 136.

Need of Struggle for Purity, 75.

Nehemiah's Gospel, 407.

New Testament not to be read into the Old, 308.

Old Testament, accelerating Gospel progress, 387; used by Christ, 385; object of, 383; and religious unity, 389; difficulties in, 392; how Christ treated it, 394; how Apostles used it, 397.

One man ministry, 236.

Patience, the need of, 250.

Prophecy fulfilled by Christ, 366.

Psalms, how many are David's, 184 (note); and suffering, 188; their solace, 190; full of God, 192; their inspiring power, 196; their work to-day, 198.

Quotation, 381.

Religious reformation, 391.

Renan quoted, 219, 346.*

Repentance born of revelation, 214; a mark of all great souls, 331.

Revelation and inspiration, 139; a progress, 400.

Revised version of old facts, 14.

Richter quoted, 248.*

Robertson quoted, 433.

Ruskin quoted, 5, 13, 18, 180, 405.

Samson, his place in the older and newer revelations, 102; his religion, 110; his humour, 113; his fall, 116.

Samuel, his ethics, 149; a politician, 150.

Satan, his history, 296.

Savonarola, 387.

Self-sacrifice, 34; parental, 24.

Scientists echoing Job, 340.

Shakespeare quoted, 56, 117, 162, 202.

Sin, what is it? 220 (note); forgiven, 216; its ministry, 218; revealed by knowledge of God, 342.

Sincerity, 327; not sinlessness, 330.

Social Purity, God's will concerning it, 73; the next crusade, 75.

Socialism: every Christian a Socialist, 77; the Divine Ideal of, 79; in the Bible, 80; God the first Socialist, 84; its basis, 88; the true, 94.

Song as a divine solace, 186.

Stanley quoted, 441.

Strength, its several kinds, 8.

Suffering entering the Messiah idea, 354.

Theological language needs revising, 105.

True nobleness, 120.

Trust and peace, 14.

Tennyson quoted, 180, 260.

ICE, ought to be exposed, 205; the gains of exposure, 207.

WAIT for God, 246; wait on God, 247.

Watson, E., quoted, 180, 414.

Wesley, C., quoted, 38.

Wife-hood, 133.

Wordsworth quoted, 1, 162.

World, hidden goodness of the, 130.

Woman's love, its influence, 132.

BURT & SONS, Printers, 58, Porchester Road, London, W.

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
CLAREMONT, CALIF.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Second Edition—Price 3/6.

THE DAWN OF MANHOOD.

With a New Preface on the Function of Opinion.

"This new Preface is as valuable as any of the Sermons themselves."—*Bayswater Chronicle.*

"They are written with a good deal of freshness and vigour, while they everywhere bear the marks of reading and culture."—*Scotsman.*

"We can assure our readers that they will not find a dull line between the backs of Dr. Clifford's book. We are in hearty agreement with the view expressed in the preface to the second edition."—*Methodist Times.*

"Dr. Clifford, as is well known, is a prince of preachers, especially for young men."—*The Freeman.*

"Marked by all Dr. Clifford's best characteristics: vigour of thought, keen appreciation of the needs of the times, spiritual insight and earnestness, profound sympathy with the struggles of the human spirit, and literary charm of style."—*Nonconformist.*

Fifth Edition—Crown 8vo. Price 2/0.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?
AN EIGHTFOLD ANSWER.

With a New Preface on "The Ideal of Life and Agnosticism."

"A fine book. . . His work is well done, and is of a high order of literary effort, but we like best its firm faith and bright encouragement to souls half blinded by the smoke of life's fierce battle."—Rev. C. H. SPURGEON in *Sword and Trowel.*

HOW TO BE SURE OF THE VOICE OF GOD.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

"Able and thoughtful." "The ideas are presented with much beauty and force."—*Nonconformist and Independent.*

"The argument is beautifully lucid and very convincing. . . Dr. Clifford's method removes the necessity of any mere theories of inspiration or canonicity."—*Paddington Mercury.*

CAN WE BE SURE OF GOD?

PREACHED TO THE STUDENTS OF THE NORTH WALES UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, JUNE 19, 1887.

"Characterised by depth of human sympathy and intensity of evangelical fervour."—*Freeman.*

PRICE FOURPENCE.

THE SEVENFOLD LAW OF MINISTERIAL TRAINING.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

"There are scores of valuable counsels in Dr. Clifford's address at which we have not been able so much as to glance. We advise every student to make himself master of its every paragraph, and at intervals of not less than three months to bring his daily life to it as to a standard. Doing this faithfully, he would be well repaid at the end of his College course, and for a long time afterwards."—*The Nonconformist and Independent*, July 14, 1887.

Christianity, the True Socialism. Price 3d.

Jesus Christ and Modern Social Life. Price 3d.

Evolution and Christianity. Price 2d.

Salvation Army; Its Genesis, Aims, and Principles, Methods and Results. Price 3d.

A Ministry of Power the Necessity of the Times. Price 2d.

Faith Healing—What is it worth? Price 2d.

LONDON:
E. MARLBOROUGH & CO., 51, OLD BAILEY, E.C.
BURT & SONS, 53, PORCHESTER ROAD, BAYSWATER, W.

X
B33
57
8
887

Clifford, John, 1836-1923.
Daily strength for daily living : twenty
mons on Old Testament themes : with an ap-
pendix on "Abraham's mistake in the offeri
Isaac" / by John Clifford. -- 2d ed. -- Lo
Isbister, 1887.
xiv, 459p. ; 19cm.

1. Baptists--Sermons. 2. Bible. O.T.--
mons. I. Title.

CCSC/mmb

A-5100